



INDIANA COLLECTION

Griffith - History

75 Years of
Growing Together

75 Years of Growing Together

The History of the People of Griffith, Indiana



A Project of Griffith's Diamond Jubilee Committee

Anna Miller Spitz

Before anyone thought of a Diamond Jubilee Celebration, Anna Miller Spitz was keeping the history of our town. Without acknowledgement, without attention, Anna recorded and preserved precious mementoes of our heritage for most of her 86 years.

This daughter of Jacob Miller was among the first generation of children born in Griffith. After marrying George P. Spitz, another town pioneer, she raised 6 children to maturity. Active in St. Mary Church throughout her life she was instrumental in founding the parish.

Family, music, and the church made up the center of Anna's life. Her interest in history was more than an elderly lady's reminiscings of the past. Her desire was to teach the young of the struggles of our past in order to help them meet the challenges of the future. As she opened her scrapbooks to us, her enthusiasm increased until we too were affected. She eagerly awaited the publication of this book.

Unfortunately, that was not to be. Anna Miller Spitz passed away on December 29th, 1978 while on winter vacation in Arizona.

To Anna who made it possible, we dedicate this book.

"SING A SONG OF GRIFFITH"

*Sing a song of Griffith.
Sing it loud with glee.
Our Town is celebrating
Its Diamond Jubilee.*

*Sing a song of gratitude
For Blessings from above,
For Families, Friends, and Visitors;
They all — we dearly love.*

*Let's sing a song of yesteryear.
Yes — sing it loud with glee,
Thanks to the clan who tilled this land,
For folks like you and me.*

*Sing praises to our Heavenly King.
His guidance they did seek.
Their Faith was strong — their labors long.
Our gratitude we sing.*

*Let's sing a song of present days
Of folks who serve us well.
Town Dads are they — to them we say
Our thanks to one and all.*

*Let's sing a song of future years.
Of Griffith our Home Town.
God grant us Peace, Good Will, less fears.
Hallelujah, let us sing!*

— ANNA MILLER SPITZ



Many Thanks . . .

. . . to the families who contributed their family photos and memorabilia to this book. Their cooperation has made for a richer more meaningful history. Their patience with the writers and researchers during interviews is appreciated. Their willingness to share recollections even to intimate family details made an invaluable contribution to the book.

Griffith senior citizens were especially helpful, but this project has received assistance from every age group from the oldest living resident to the youth of our town.

Among our predecessors in developing the town's history are the Women's Club and the Yo-Hoes, a garden club who began their efforts in the 1950's when Griffith turned 50. More impetus for the project came from the Community Spirit's Historical Committee when they sponsored the Franklin School Day of Nostalgia in 1973. St. Mary's Youth Club later produced a historical slide presentation in 1976.

To all the people of Griffith, we thank you for your cooperation and your assistance.

Special recognition is due to the following people for their key roles in the production of this book.



Tom Dwan

As Revenue Division Chairman of the Diamond Jubilee Corporation, Tom supervised this book in addition to handling the sale of the many other souvenir items.

Evelyn Bunce

As the protege of Anna Miller Spitz, Ev completed Anna's work as the town's unofficial historian. Over the years Ev has promoted interest in town history through her lectures and newspaper articles.



John "Carter" Cioroianu

John put his 30 years sales experience to work to sell the ads which financed this book. John and his salesmen turned the project from a nice but expensive idea into a reality.



Marion Larson

Brought into the project as the deadlines approached, Marion provided ancillary research and organization services. A recent resident of Griffith, Marion made the sacrifices that made the difference.



Arthur Bonneau, Lawrence Bonneau —*Production Management*, Julietta Bonneau — *Production Assistant*, Debra Clark, L. Scott Hays —*Graphic Design*, Irene Joyce —*Geological Consultant*

The Jubilee Story

The Diamond Jubilee had its beginnings in late 1977 as a few volunteers met to find a special way to celebrate our town's special milestone. From their early lonely efforts their project grew to include the hundreds involved at this writing.

Their initial effort was the Diamond Jubilee Kickoff Dinner held in May of 1978 which provided the seed money. This all important step financed the employment of Wayne Lemmon. Mr. Lemmon, whose many years of experience with the Roberts Company as a community consultant, was the ideal choice to lead the group. His dynamism and vision were the key elements which made the Jubilee a success.

To all those whose time and energy were donated to bring the project off, we wish to express our gratitude.

Executive Board—from left front row: Ev Bunce, Richard Miller, Helen Molinaro; Second row: Wayne Lemmon, Gale Riggle, Gene Rowe, Larry Owen, Dale Newhard.



Headquarters Administration — from left front row: Max Adams, Barbara Schweitzer, Dan McCain; Second Row: Bill Lator, Aubrey Wilcox, Dick Blythe.

The Beginning

The land has once been rolling plains with a wide river valley running from South to North. Only hardy plants such as firs and spruce could thrive in the chilled climate. Life repeated its endless cycle in step time monotony.

Events were occurring far to the North that would disrupt the pattern forever.

It was snowing.

As each successive winter's snow and cold increased, each summer's heat decreased allowing the snow to accumulate year round. With the patience only nature can master the snow increased in volume turning the lower layers to ice. At the peak of its size the glacier would measure over three miles in depth.

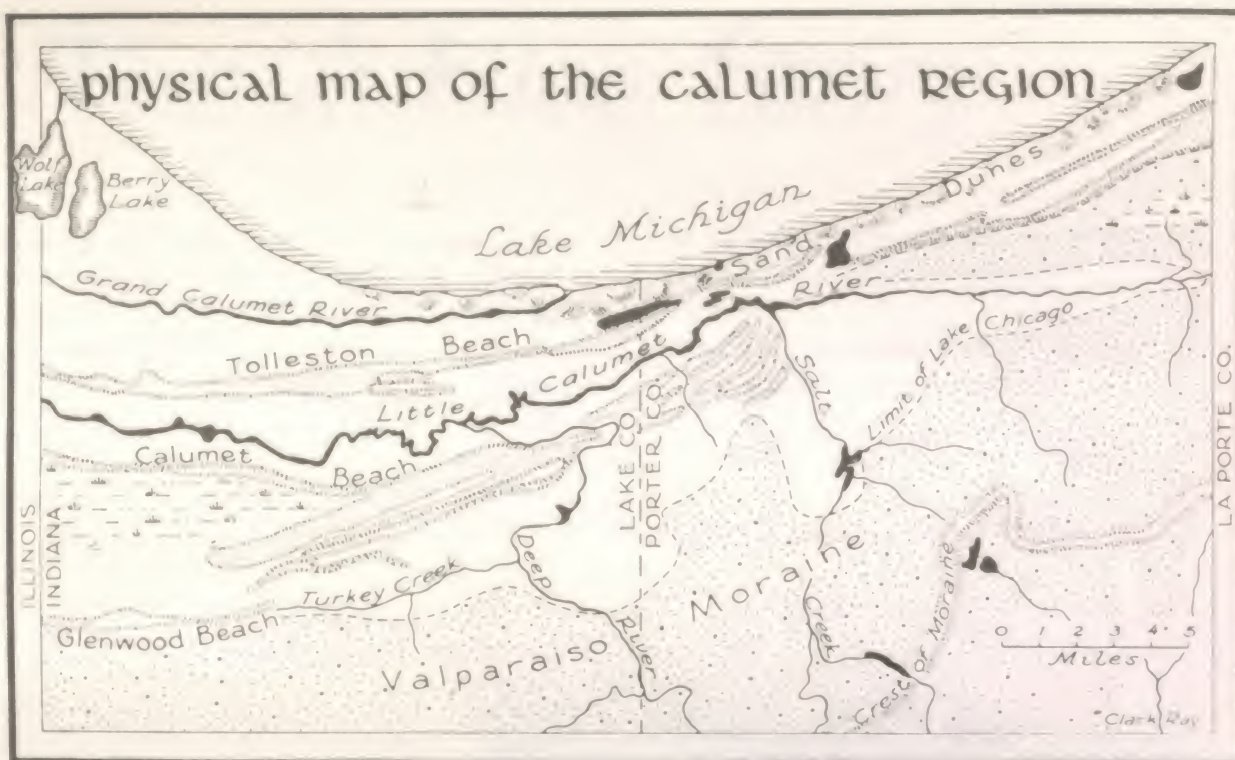
The last great glacial period known to geologists as the Wisconsin had begun.

It invaded the Northwestern part of Indiana 25,000 years ago only to recede and melt. Its retreat was only to regroup and invade a second time 10,000 years later. Its second advance bulldozed a high ridge known to geologists as the Valparaiso Moraine and to the rest of us as Rte. 30.

As it melted it left the sediments, sand, silt, and clay it had ground by its sliding grinding pressure. The meltwater filled the basin it had sculpted. The water's currents and the winds combined to further arrange the material creating curving underwater sandbars which parallel the old shoreline.

As these sandbars grew they formed a spit. These were left behind as the lake level fell. As the ancient Lake Chicago shrank it created intermediate beaches. One, the Calumet Beach, formed the dune we know today as Ridge Road.

The spit that was left behind as the waters receded connected the ancient beaches and trapped waters in the depressions. Thus a slough area was born. The area resembled a bayou in which plant life was abundant.



Man found this environment to be a vast storehouse of food. The societies of the Potawattomi and the Miami hunted here. The area was also a thoroughfare for travelers. The people of the Sauk tribe passed through following the high ground of the dune ridges on their way to annual councils in what is now Detroit.

As it had before, the natural cycle followed uninterrupted for centuries.

Once again, however, events were occurring thousands of miles away that would alter the face of the area dramatically. The time was the middle 1800's A.D.

Pressures were building in Europe as the old world crumbled. Nineteenth Century Europe reacted to post Napoleonic chaos with alternating oppression and revolution. As national boundaries changed, ethnic and religious minorities experienced new persecutions. While Europe created more displaced persons, its people began to look to America for more opportunities for social advancement. The new force was forming. It would become a glacier-like force of people — traveling, scraping, and shaping the new world much as Wisconsinian had done before.

Taking advantage of this new resource, the leadership of the United States sought to open the western regions of the country. In 1838 President Andrew Jackson executed his plan to push all "Indians" west of the Mississippi. Coupled with railroad expansion financed by Eastern capital, this encouraged the new immigrants to settle the mid-western lands.

While there were new settlements and the beginnings of cities throughout Indiana in the early 1800's, the Northwest area of the state was largely bypassed until the middle of the nineteenth century as too swampy.

Crown Point was not settled until 1837 and remained semi-isolated.

Again, events far away would change things permanently.

Under the terms of the Northwest Ordinance, the United States Government owned the lands in this area. In 1852 the Congress passed the Swamp Reclamation Act in which these lands were ceded to the states for the purpose of eventually distributing them to new settlers.

The Indiana State Legislature subsequently passed their own Reclamation Act which, in effect, offered these swamp lands for sale to homesteaders for \$1.25 an acre providing the new owners would drain and reclaim these lands.

The stage was set for the wave of immigrants that would remake the face of our country.

1853

By appearances they were nothing special. In fact, they were the archetype of the many who would follow.

They had left their native Germany for the uncertain future of life in the wilds of a new and hostile land. Alone and with only the few goods which could be transported across a 700 mile journey they camped in a clearing on higher ground. Their first home was a sod roofed dugout.

The man and his brother would drain, plow, and plant 40 acres of buckwheat, corn, and potatoes purchased through the Swamp Act. The woman gave birth to 8 children who would go on to build a town.

In the relative isolation of the area they made a start. As others followed in the next few years they would join forces with them in a communal effort to prosper.

Mathias and Anna Miller had marked the path for others to follow.

The Path Widens

In January of 1854, the Joseph Hoffman family settled in the area. This family later sold to the Jacob Helfen family who, in turn, sold a portion of their land to the town's first developer in the 1890's. This portion would become known as "The Original Town of Griffith" and later the town's central business district.

In the late 1850's the first settlers were joined by the Peter Redar and Nicholas Hillbrich families.

At about the same time, other areas in the Lake County area were being settled. Erns Hohman built a farm and later an inn in what would become Hammond.

It would remain primarily a stagecoach stop until 1869 when G. K. Hammond would build his packing plant, and draw railroads, workers, and community development to that town.

Trading posts and farms were springing up in the sparsely populated areas of Merrillville, Ross, and what would later be known as Highland. Crown Point was becoming the primary commercial center.

Shortly after the Millers' arrival, a young man named Aaron Hart settled in the Lake County. Unlike the others we have discussed who came with little more than the shirts on their backs, Aaron Hart brought capital, managerial experience, and, most of all, vision to the area.

He had left Philadelphia as a successful book publisher. When he settled in the area of Schererville, he began buying land until eventually his holdings totaled



Aaron Hart — Pioneer Developer

17,000 acres in Griffith, Highland, and especially Schererville. Mr. Hart was not a speculator — he was here to build. He succeeded because he had the money and ability to drain the land.

According to Mr. and Mrs. Matt Kuhn who worked for Hart for 18 years, he placed a primary emphasis on digging drainage ditches and building wagon roads. Hart didn't just start a farm — he built an organization. At one time in the early years he employed 40 men and worked 14 yoke of oxen, 2 horse teams and 3 mule teams.

Later, as his operation grew, others joined the effort. As railroads were built through the area, commercial activity grew. Hart's muscle, along with that of many others, made Schererville grow to the point that during the late 1800's it became the focal point for south county commercial and social life.

Many services were available only in Schererville for 30 to 40 years. Griffith residents traveled to St. Michaels and others in Schererville for Sunday services. Social affairs such as dances and bazaars were held in Schererville too. Hard as it may be to believe today, in the 1860's thru the 1880's Schererville was "where the action was."

The Steel Lifeline

Once again events outside the Calumet Region would steer Griffith's destiny.

This time it was the railroad and its desire to link the growing city of Chicago with the East Coast.

In 1852 the Erie and Kalamazoo railroad (later to be known as the Michigan Central) ran a rail line from the Michigan border through the northern portion of Lake County to Chicago. In 1854 a sister line, the Michigan Southern completed a line east from Joliet through Griffith and then swinging north to meet the Chicago line at the Michigan border. Later both lines would be merged into the Michigan Central as part of Vanderbilt's New York Central System.

Griffith's first railroad ran through the Hoffman property described earlier. Others would follow. The EJ&E, the Grand Trunk, and the Chicago and Erie all laid their trunk lines through Griffith.

While motorists may blame traffic congestion and inconvenience on railroads today, it was the tracks that created the town.

In effect the train brought a town to the wilderness.

The rails brought people, progress, and communication to the tiny community.

People

As the gangs of high ballers and gandy dancers pushed the steel ribbon forward, many of the workers saw the opportunities offered in Griffith and settled down to farm at least part time. Some of the residents found jobs with the railroad to supplement their farming income. Others supplied the railroad with provisions such as wood and produce. Mathias Miller, for instance, provided cordwood for the Michigan Central for \$1.00 a cord. As the railroads expanded they brought more residents to the area. Men such as Peter Young who would become an agent and Peter Govert built homes in the growing central area to be near their railroad jobs while maintaining farms on the outskirts of the "town area." These men and their children would go on to play important parts in the formation of the town.

As time went by, the railroad interests would grow stronger as more men arrived in Griffith to work the rails. Men such as the Walters, Beirigers, and Grimms continued the railroading tradition.

Progress

The railroads brought consumer goods and farm implements to the area that had not been available before. It would open up opportunities for merchandising that were previously impossible. More important, it opened up markets for produce grown by the local farmers.

In the 1870's, prosperity and availability of lumber and building supplies made it possible for residents to move from log cabins to frame homes. One of the earliest of these structures is the Peter Govert home which still stands at 338 S. Broad.



Early railroad workers (approx. turn of century) posed for this picture at Griffith's main crossing. This unidentified section gang is representative of the men who built the railroads and the town.

Communication

As the railroad network wound its way throughout Lake County, ties were strengthened to Chicago. Hammond was a prime example of this relationship. Much of Lake County would become a staging area for trains entering and leaving Chicago as freight depots, switching yards, and spur lines expanded. The Calumet Region's destiny was unalterably tied to that of Chicago. This relationship was intensified in 1874 when the B&O line achieved a long held dream of connecting the Atlantic seaboard with Chicago via a direct trunk line.

The ideas and fashions of the big town to the west had a strong impact on the thinking of the little town on the edge of the marsh. Although the local farmers

retained their conservatism, the outside world's influences continued to reach into the quiet community with the steady influx of new settlers.

This relationship with Chicago wasn't always a pleasant one. In the 1880's and 1890's the new rich of Chicago began using Northwest Indiana for horseracing, cockfighting, gambling and other "undesirable activities" which were outlawed in Illinois. Roby, Indiana, an area now known as the Robertsedale section of Hammond, was the center of much of this activity.

Griffith was also involved in this situation. In the nearby area of Ross, extremely wealthy families from Chicago had established the Tolleston Gun Club. The club was used by families such as the Burnhams, Fields and Wards to entertain guests like the Vanderbilts, and Rockefellers. Excursion trains brought the hunters to their own station where coaches took them to their fully staffed lodges.

The problems arose from a dispute over the use of the large quantity of land that made up the club's game preserve. Local farmers who had hunted there before the club's arrival claimed the right to continue to pursue game there. The new owners claimed exclusive ownership rights and enforced their claim with armed guards.

There ensued what was described in history books written shortly after the turn of the century as a "range war." Hired guards were pitted against farmers desperate to supplement their diets with fresh game during hard times.

The guards got the worst of it.

An apocryphal story goes that a young farmer killed one of the wealthy hunters in a barroom gun fight and became an instant folk hero. His trial on murder charges created more furor. There was even a song composed in his honor. In short, the man was acquitted, the farmers continued to hunt, and the guards were fired. The Tolleston Gun Club was never the same. It closed before the turn of the century.

The Surveyor

The town's close association with the railroads is even reflected in its name.

While controversy surrounds the origin of the name of Griffith for the town, the one generally accepted today centers on a railroad surveyor for the Grand Trunk, a Mr. Griffith, who set the grade for that railroad. His work in the 1870's included the preparation of maps which he signed. It was only natural for railroaders to refer to this area as Griffith's Section. Since railroaders dominated the town, the name stuck and by the completion of the Grand Trunk line in the 1880's the casual reference had become the unquestioned name.

Outside Influence

Many of the children of the early pioneers left home for life in the city. When some of them returned they brought with them new ideas and sophisticated business procedures.

One example of this trend was Jacob Miller son of Mathias Miller, the original inhabitant. Jacob struck out on his own for the opportunities of the city. What he discovered was a job in a shoe factory. He also met his bride Margaret Boesen, originally from Milwaukee. The city lost its appeal as the couple tried to raise 2 children in cramped quarters on the low wages of the sweat shops.

Jacob returned to the homestead and set up the area's first cobbler shop. With a growing population of farmers and railroaders the shoe business was a natural. Jacob prospered and eventually built a second larger store near the first. The

second store building still stands at 246 S. Broad Street. It's present occupant is the Griffith Used Book Store.



Griffith's first recorded retail venture, Jacob Miller's shoe store, is pictured above. The picture at left shows the exterior of the combined store and residence. (Two Miller daughters are seated in front of the store). The photo at the right depicts the interior of the store. The bench in the foreground was used by patrons during fittings. The right side of the shop was the clothing department. The people in the shop are not identified but most probably are the Miller children who assisted their father in the family business.

In addition to selling shoes, Jacob also sold insurance for the Lincoln National Life Company as well as real estate. These were the roots of the Spitz & Miller Insurance and Realty Company. Jacob was the first to bring these services to Lake County, making Spitz & Miller the oldest agency in the Calumet Region.

This story is fairly typical of other Griffith family histories and parallels the growth and maturity of the town. Like most successful communities, Griffith is a blend of ethnic, religious, and geographic backgrounds. People with widely varying work experiences joined to produce a richer mixture of talents.

1890

In 1890 Griffith was poised for another of those cataclysmic changes. Four railroads crossed at what was becoming the center of town. The marshes were drained in large part. The economy was sound; the people were eager for improvement.

The stage was set for a new plunge into the future. All that was needed was the catalyst to begin the reaction and the boom would catch fire.

Once again, it was a force from the outside that would change our course forever.

Jay Dwiggins arrived in town.

The Jay Dwiggins Plan



Creased and scarred by decades of folding and use, this is the original wall map used by the Dwiggins brothers to promote their factory town in 1893. The map was also used by Jacob Miller who acted as the Dwiggins' local agent and remained in his possession after their collapse. It became the blue print for the town's development over the years.

The map is still displayed in the offices of Spitz & Miller.

Buy Where There's Sure Growth Ahead!

Compared to the staid German farmers of the area, Jay Dwiggin was a whirlwind. His vision was beyond the average man's horizon. His plans were bold.

His ambitions were limitless.

Unfortunately, his capital wasn't.

His first act in town was to purchase a portion of the Helfen property for his initial land development venture. The purchase price was \$8400 for 140 acres to be paid over 3 years.

At first the Dwiggin Brothers & Company laid out a plat of "blocks, lots, streets, and alleys" in a marshy area east of the present downtown district. After closer inspection, they located the "Original Town of Griffith" as recorded in county records in an area bounded by Elm on the north, the EJ&E on the south, Wood on the west and Arbogast as the eastern boundary.

For a time, the Dwiggin Company considered changing the name of the town to Dwiggin Junction. They settled for naming streets after the principles of the firm — Jay, his brother Elmer, and their notary public Guy Arbogast.

The firm's headquarters were never in Griffith. Their office was located in the Chamber of Commerce building in Chicago. Their resident sales agent was the enterprising Jacob Miller. Their first sales were to speculators. Sometimes their actions indicated frustration as when lot 21 was sold to Mae R. S. Webner, the proprietor of Webner's Lunch Room on Wabash near their office for \$250 in meal tickets.

The Factory Town

The Dwiggins plan was to promote Griffith as "Chicago's Best Factory Suburb." His innovative approach was nothing short of brilliant. He promoted heavily to manufacturers in order to get them to locate here. As incentives he offered to provide factory buildings to the new firms plus contribute half the payroll of the firm for the first year. All the manufacturer had to do was employ a guaranteed number of employees for 3 years. If they did, the land and buildings were theirs. If not, the title reverted to Dwiggins.

Obviously, the purpose of this strategy was to lock in employment opportunities which would lure new residents to town who would buy lots.

His promotional literature boasted that "There are no labor unions and no fear of strikes." He also claimed that numerous factories were locating here. Among them were The Pleasant Remedies Company, an ice plant, the Pennsylvania Art Glass Company, and something called the Bum Factory.

According to his correspondence, The Pleasant Remedies purchased a factory building on South Broad; however, no other reference is made to it. More than likely, it never operated. In fact, that was the case for most of the enterprises that the brothers claimed to have brought to town.

Research of the correspondence of town residents indicate that while foundations were laid and, in some cases, buildings started, few if any ever really operated. Obviously this construction was overly optimistic to say the least. However, it made things look good to potential residents.

It also created the flaw in an otherwise imaginative plan. The Dwiggins Brothers suffered from an extremely negative cash flow. The only way they could possibly stay even with the up front expense of building factories and subsidizing payrolls was to generate advance lot sales.

Consequently they promoted heavily to speculators. "Buy where there's sure growth ahead," he claimed in his brochures. The pitch made sense in its simplest terms as expressed in his literature: "Factories attract populations rapidly. They make big cities out of small suburbs — when the facilities are there. Griffith has them! Buy early and sell when the town has grown into a city! That's shrewd investing!"

The developers also advertised in national publications such as the *Prairie Farmer* with substantially the same pitch. They ran excursion trains from Chicago to Griffith in order to develop enthusiasm in speculators.

They also promoted heavily to potential residents at the Columbian Exposition, a world's fair held in Chicago in 1893. Immigrants and businesses the world over were attracted to Chicago for that event conceived by that city's promotional genius, Dan Burnham.

The Dwiggins Brothers sold lots sight unseen to many at that fair and brought carloads of potential buyers out on the special excursion trains.

Boom fever affected many of the original inhabitants. Jacob Miller moved to his second store during this time as described earlier. In the incomplete records of the time there is a mention of a "Clemens Bank" which evidently operated briefly. It is also believed that Russell Hall was built at 105 E. Main at this time. Ground was broken, and a foundation laid for a Baptist Church which was never completed. Other enterprises sprang up around the area including the Southworth Store on what is now the east side of Broad Street just south of the rail junction.

This grocery and general store was the effort of Harvey Ellis and his ambitious son-in-law, Lou Southworth.

Mr. Southworth's story is interesting in that it shows a bold young man with the air of an adventurer about him. Born in Indiana, he left to seek his fortune in the boom towns of California. He returned to the area of Ross Township where he married Harvey's daughter. The relative quiet of neighboring Ross could not hold Louis Southworth when the boom was on in Griffith. In 1891 he and his father-in-law began what is believed to be the first grocery store in Griffith. Louis Southworth would go on to play an important part in the town's incorporation and development.



The L.A. Southworth Grocery and General Store was established in 1891 and is shown here as it appeared in 1910. Mr. Southworth and his father-in-law, Harvey Ellis, built a successful business, ran the post office and remained active in community affairs for many years.

Others in the town benefited from Dwiggins' presence through sales of their lands. Peter Young was one of these. According to correspondence between Young and Sam Woods, noted Lake County historian, Young claimed that he had purchased farm property southeast of the junction of Main and the EJ&E tracks for \$9.00 an acre in 1887. He sold it to Dwiggins in 1891 for \$150.00 an acre. This land would become the site of a blacksmith shop and later in 1927 the location of the Keen Foundry.

While euphoria was the mood of the times, trouble was brewing below the surface. The Dwiggins Brothers cash situation was becoming critical. Their frantic attempts to stay upright without liquidating are indicated by complicated financing arrangements. As fast as they would pay off a section of land, they would mortgage it in order to pay off another.

This situation was compounded by their efforts to insure an exclusive arrangement. They continued buying property and creating "Additions." Among these were Manufacturers Additions numbers 1 and 2, Midway, Oak Forest (which was southwest of the railroad diamond), and Jolidan (which encompassed the 100 S. block of Broad Street and the first western block of Main).

As the businesses he had lined up to locate in Griffith delayed their decisions and negotiations snagged, the developers saw their time running out. Their correspondence indicates difficulties in talks with the ice plant. Other proposed

factories were never occupied. Among them were the Williams Wooden Ware factory for the manufacture of wooden bowls, the Potters Foundry on Lindberg and the Ricketts and the Rau Bros foundries. The building for Rau would later be the home of the Mapes Paper firm and later the sight of Packaging Corp.

Faced with this dilemma, the brothers sought to gain time by borrowing heavily. Their source of credit was W. H. Osterhout, a Pennsylvania real estate investor. Before anyone in town realized what was happening, the Dwiggins Brothers were \$600,000 in debt to Mr. Osterhout.

Perhaps with more time, the Dwiggins Brothers Company could have worked their way out of this dilemma. But it was not to be. The Panic of 1893 threw the economy into chaos and brought on one of the country's deepest depressions. With it the Dwiggins brothers paper empire collapsed.

The factories remained unfinished, the lots undeveloped. Mr. Osterhout now owned a town he never visited.

In 1897 Osterhout's attorneys filed suit against Dwiggins in Lake County courts to force the sale of the properties. After quieting title to all the lands the sheriff's sale resulted in the lands being sold to Osterhout himself for \$15,500 in 1898.

The Dwiggins brothers had already left town for good. In 1900 they appeared in Argentina where they signed power of attorney letters to their other brother Robert who represented them in counter claims against Osterhout. In 1901 these claims were settled when the Pennsylvania investor paid the Dwiggins \$25,000 to release all interests in the case.

The boom was over. The new residents who came hoping for jobs were gone. Those who stayed dug in and faced the new challenges with optimism. There was still the railroad. The land was good and they had all learned a great deal.

Their first priority was to stay afloat. Later they would slowly acquire the Osterhout property and see it developed properly.

Fortunately, the Pennsylvania investor wasn't interested enough in the town to consider changing the name to Osterhoutsville.

Griffith Social Life — Turn of the Century



Griffith people always found some time to enjoy themselves. Most activities were family activities having something to do with either sports or music. Top: a crowd gathered to watch a baseball game shortly after the turn of the century. Left: The Jacob Miller family in 1893. Below: The Millers, Goverts, Naumes, and Schmals enjoy an evening of visiting in 1912.



Griffith — 1900

This map indicates the direction of the overall growth of the town. Beginning with Dwiggins, the town developed in a northerly direction. The subdivisions indicated were named by the two early developers. In 1900 most of the streets existed only on paper. All names of streets are the modern names to avoid confusion.

The New Century

As the country moved into the Twentieth Century, the tiny community sifted through the rubble of the broken dreams of Jay Dwigins. In the wake of the whirlwind they had battled against a national depression, bank failures, discouragement and doubt during the painful period of let-down and readjustment.

Many who had come for the boom left for other horizons. Those who stayed among the half finished factories, would build a town from the ruins of the paper empire.

Starting Over

The situation was not entirely without advantages. Although the boom turned out to be a mirage, the unique assets which had originally attracted the developers were still there.

These would be the basis for the community's resurgence along with the faith and pride of the handful of courageous people.

As they took stock of their situation, they realized they could still count on the railroads. Railroad employment would account for a significant portion of the town's economy for decades. The railroad tradition was passed on from father to son as families such as the Walters dedicated themselves to rail lines. (Walters would raise 9 sons each one named after famous leaders. Theodore Roosevelt Walters, born in 1904 and a 51 year veteran with the EJ&E appears on our cover with Michele Ward, one of our newer residents).

The Quiet Lines

A second stabilizing force in the town's economy was the Indiana Pipeline Company. Built in the late 1880's by John D. Rockefeller's original Standard Oil Co., the pipeline connected the Lima Ohio oil fields with Standard's new refinery 10 miles north of Griffith on the Lake Michigan shore at White's Crossing (later Whiting, Indiana).

Griffith's part of Rockefeller's venture had greater significance than just allowing a pipeline to pass through town. Griffith became a main staging area for the last leg of the crude's journey to the refinery. The station, located in the vast prairie on the south west outskirts of town, included a storage facilities, a pump house and elaborate control systems.

A popular idea among industrialists at the height of the industrial revolution was the concept of company towns as pioneered by Adolph Krupp of Germany. Oversimplified, the idea was that when an industrialist built a plant, he should provide a town as well. Thus, the key elements of housing, social life, and municipal services would be totally integrated into the work life of the community. This concept is best exemplified by the Pullman towns and, in the negative extreme, the Peabody Coal towns.

During his building years John D. Rockefeller was an exponent of this system of benevolent paternalism. It was his practice to construct company housing for his workers at all key locations which he did in Griffith. While Griffith never became a "company town" like Whiting, some of the homes constructed by Rockefeller still stand in the 100 block North of both Lindberg and Raymond Streets.

Some of the old company housing still stands on Lindberg and Raymond as shown in photo below.



Above: The Standard Oil pipeline was the first to arrive in town. This facility is located on old Pipeline Drive southwest of the town center.

Just like the railroaders, the residents of those homes built an oil tradition. Among the early pipeline walkers were the Poulten family and the Gustafsons. They and many others participated in the growth of the town. One example is August Gustafson who had come to Griffith from Chicago in 1904 as a young man in order to improve his failing health. (It worked rather well, he lived to be 82).

In addition to his pipeline job, August pushed the northern frontier of the town forward by starting a farm in the area just north of what is now 45th street between Broad and Cline. His active participation in church affairs (Methodist) made him a community leader.

The Lima Ohio fields have long since dried up, but Griffith's involvement in the petroleum industry continues. Griffith's location and the Standard facilities created the magnet which drew other pipelines from the South. Today we enjoy an ideal arrangement in that a number of pipelines and tank farms contribute to the tax base but are hidden away from our primarily residential town.

Three R's

The Griffith settlement was originally split among three townships North, St. John, and Calumet. The most important service provided by these units of

government was that of education. By the end of the 19th century our area was served by four schools.

Originally, Elliot School located at old Lincoln Highway and Colfax served the farmers' children in that area. Later, in 1886, Troy School was built by a Mr. Charlie Harder for \$458 in the area of Reder Road and Colfax. As the boom began in Griffith, Troy became overcrowded with 33 students. Therefore, in 1893 district 11 of St. John Township built a school at the corner of Broad and Ave D. Later, it would become known as South School and still stands near the entrance of South Park.



Griffith's early schools and pioneer school teachers brought education to the railroaders' children in the marsh. Pioneer school teacher Linda Taylor, daughter of Town Marshall John Taylor, posed with her class at Elliot School in 1893. Below, this otherwise unidentified group was the 1911 graduating class at South School.





North School after the turn of the century.

North School, built by North Township was constructed in the same era at what is now Broad and Lake Streets.

While township records do not include details surrounding the construction of these schools, it is worth noting the important role these schools played in the development of the town. Obviously, the availability of basic education for the next generation of town leaders was a crucial step in preparing for the coming years of struggle. The schools also provided a focal point for communication as the many isolated farm people began to be woven into the social fabric of a town. These schools were relatively short lived, but during their existence they played an invaluable part in the process of urbanization of the town.

Among the pioneering teachers in those early days were Linda Taylor, daughter of Civil War veteran and Griffith Marshal, John Taylor, and Anna Humpher who taught at South School in the early 1890's.

Griffith students also benefited from instruction of two very famous ladies, Carrie Gosch and Carrie Seberger. Both ladies were pioneer schoolteachers who carried on their traditions of excellence well into modern times. Ms. Gosch, for instance, taught in the rural township system throughout Lake County and eventually settled in the Crown Point - Merrillville area where a school is now named for her.

Legacy of Jay Dwiggins

Among the advantages in the early 1900's was the experience gained during the boom time. Jay Dwiggins had given the local people a brief look at what could be done with the area. Of greater importance was his town plan. The plats of his subdivisions laid out in intersecting streets would remain the model for the town's development for years to come. His plans reflect the influence of Dan Burnham, the first of the great city planners who was responsible for the orderly growth of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871.

The Struggle Continues

While these and other assets provided opportunities for future growth there were disadvantages as well. The obstacles that would remain to challenge the residents for years to come included the lack of municipal improvements and capital. Chief among the problems were the low swamps to the south of town. During the rainy months of spring, what roads there were became impassable. As an illustration of this, Anna Miller Spitz's memoirs include an anecdote regarding Dr. Iddings. Griffith had no resident doctor until 1913. Dr. Iddings, a Merrillville resident, served the southern Lake County area by riding a circuit which included regular stops at Griffith's Harkenrider's Hall on South Broad. Anna recalls the time that the doctor's horse refused to cross the high water blocking the road and the doctor was forced to wade into town in order to make an emergency sick call.

Like the rest of America, Griffith faced the transition from a loosely organized agricultural society to a world of growing urbanization. At the turn of the century, the settlement had no concentrated nucleus. The sparse population was scattered about in little packets of activity across a 20 square mile area. Homes sprang up in the middle of empty fields and what would become the center of town was farm and garden area. This would plague those who tried to build a town center for years. Livestock, fertilizer, and crops next to the town hall somehow didn't fit an urban plan.

The Balance

All in all, Griffith's advantages and obstacles seemed to balance out evenly at the turn of the century. The factor that made the difference was the quality of people who made up the town. Their determination and ingenuity would tip the scales in favor of solid growth.

The people who made the difference include the energetic Jacob Miller and his brother John who had begun a "sample room" or tavern a few doors from Jacob's store on South Broad. John's establishment still stands and in 1979 is now known as Herman & Mary's. John participated in town affairs for many years as a school board member and community leader.

We've already seen the drive of the ambitious Lou Southworth. Joining this group were the Beirigers. Matt and P. J. Beiriger were railroaders who contributed their efforts through political involvement. P. J. also opened a hotel in the 1890's.



Junction Ave. (later Broad Street) circa 1900. This is the view of the East side of the town's business district at the turn of the century. The scene is south of the tracks looking north. From left: The new post office, Harvey Ellis' home (partially hidden), the Southworth Store, unidentified home.



Future leaders. The railroad shaped the men and prepared them for the challenge of building a town. Nick Austgen, a board member in the twenties appears far left. Next to him is Matt Beiriger.

Mathew was elected to the Town Board six times and was the town's first Clerk Treasurer. Born in 1872, he started his railroad career as a waterboy in 1887 at the age of 15. The line was the old Chicago and Atlantic which would later become the Erie. By 1894 he became the Griffith Agent and Operator for the Griffith area. In the railroading hierarchy of the times, this made Matt Beiriger a very important man. As the agent, his word was law at the age of 22. As such, the other railroad employees of the line looked to him for leadership. He obviously wore the responsibility well as he retained that position for over 50 years until his retirement at age 75 in 1945.

It is easy to understand how the authority inherent in his position could transfer to the community life of the town. Fortunately, Matt Beiriger used his influence wisely. He provided leadership during extremely critical times in Griffith's history. He was a member of the board when they embarked on the sidewalk program and other public works projects. He was also Clerk Treasurer during and immediately following the construction of the Town Hall. All in all his tenure in office totals 14 years including 6 as Town Clerk.

Brother P. J. Beiriger never held elective office. His first significant act in town was the construction of the hotel which bore his name. During the boom years the hotel was the first temporary residence for many newcomers. Later, the hotel was used in large part by the train crews on layovers between assignments. It would later include a restaurant and eventually a bar. The P. J. Beiriger Hotel building still stands at 139 S. Broad, the present location of the Ye Olde Town Saloon.



P.J. Beiriger was the driving force behind the early school development. His hotel is seen in this view of Broad Street in 1915. The hotel is the large building on the left with the awnings. P.J.'s portrait in 1931 appeared in Franklin's yearbook, "The Reflector."



Peter J. Beiriger's civic involvement was concentrated in public education. He was a charter member of the Griffith School Board and spent over 30 years as president of that board. It was under his leadership that Franklin School was built and expanded. During these years Griffith's commitment to quality education was established. As the professionalism of schools increased and the administration modernized, the groundwork was laid for our present day school system. D.L. Simon, Superintendent of Schools and Principal of Franklin from 1926 thru 1938, described Beiriger as a financial genius and a natural leader.

Room to Grow

There were people of promise on the horizon as well. They would be given the chance to show what they could do. Griffith offered room to grow to the new generation of builders.

Sometimes that promise showed in the most unlikely places. In 1903 a young man of 9 years would quit school after the death of his father in order to help his mother run their small farm in the nearby New Elliot area on Old Lincoln Highway. Later, in his teens he worked for the Erie Railroad repairing cars for 21¢ an hour. With the money he saved from that job he bought a truck which he used to deliver coal.

Six trucks later, he built a coal yard and later added other retail businesses. All the while, he maintained continued involvement in community service as a town board member. As a real estate developer in the 40's and 50's he built a large section of the town. The 10 children he raised have gone on to expand the empire he built. The little boy had grown into the man we know as W. P. Christenson.

Those who never met Warner Peter Christenson find this story impossible to believe. Those who knew him have no difficulty at all. At one time his interests included the coal yard, a furniture store, a hardware store, a builder - contractor firm, the area's largest Chevrolet dealership, a lumber yard, an entire block of the downtown business district including the town's post office, and several hundred home lots which he and his partner, Art Govert, were developing.

His 9 sons and one daughter have continued their father's tradition of community involvement since his death at age 76 in 1970.



W. P. Christenson
Circa 1930's

Penning

Adolph Penning's involvement in town affairs didn't start until 1922 at the age of 28. Adolph was a railroader who was born in Griffith. Energetic and ambitious, he attended business school while working for the Erie line.

After serving in the Navy during World War I, he returned to Griffith where he would become town treasurer in 1922. Six years later he resigned only to be convinced to run again in 1935 when the two positions of Clerk and Treasurer were combined. He served in this post for 5 consecutive terms for a total of 26 years service to the town. He was also the founder of Griffith's Republican Party, a charter member of the Lions Club and active in Isaac Walton and the Legion. Adolph still resides in Griffith in 1979.



The Pennings — Adolph, Frieda, and Will are shown here in the early 1900's. Frieda would become Mrs. W. P. Christenson. Adolph and Will are shown at left just before they left for World War I.



**Dr. Malmstone
circa 1931**

The Doctor

In 1908 a young man was teaching at the old North School in Griffith by day and living another life at night.

In the evenings and during the summers he traveled to Chicago to examine cadavers and probe skeletons.

The man was Francis Malmstone who graduated from the Chicago College of Medicine and Surgery in 1913 at the age of 36. After his graduation the doctor returned to practice in Griffith for over 40 years.

As the town's first resident physician, Doctor Malmstone was a key member of the newer group who would shape Griffith's future. In addition to providing invaluable medical services, the doctor was what is best described as a "pillar of the community." As a board member of the Methodist Church and a Mason, he fulfilled his social responsibilities.

His most significant contribution to the town was his 17 years service as a School Board Member. Beginning in 1925, he served with P. J. Beiriger and others during the critical years of the late 20's and 30's.

The Depression Years were especially difficult in that tax revenues and school budgets were declining while school population climbed.

Dr. Malmstone never held elective office in the town government. Like so many others throughout Griffith's history, the doctor used his position of respect, leadership abilities, and influence to help the community meet the challenges of the Twentieth Century without political power. His influence was demonstrated when many groups attempting significant ventures sought him out to lend his prestige to their efforts. The Griffith State Bank and the Griffith Realty Development Company were examples of this type of community involvement. Dr. Malmstone died at the age of 77 in 1954.

George P. Spitz

Another man who exerted a positive influence without holding elective office was George Spitz. His story is interesting in that it shows a young man who beat the odds to achieve not only personal success but a special place in the story of our town.

George was born in Griffith in 1892 several years after his parents who had emigrated from Alsace-Lorraine settled on a small farm west of the rail junction between the Grand Trunk and Michigan Central tracks.

George's future looked bright in 1907 when he graduated as Valedictorian from North School. Fate would take a hand. He left high school at Hammond High due to illness and was never able to return.

Undaunted, George's drive made the difference as he pursued a variety of career avenues. He began working for Matt Beiriger as a clerk at the Erie in 1908. His ambition and keen mind led him into several part time ventures including electrical installation and photography. Many of the photographs in this book are his.

It is easy to understand why George tried so hard. The girl he loved was Anna Miller, daughter of entrepreneur Jacob Miller. In 1912 he would marry his sweetheart, and over the years Anna Miller Spitz would give birth to 8 children.



**George Spitz
Insurance pioneer
& civic leader**

As his responsibilities grew, George hustled even more. For a while his part time work included rural mail delivery.

All of these avocations were only temporary — it wasn't until he took an interest in Jacob Miller's insurance business that George discovered his calling. As he concentrated his hustle and drive into this new enterprise, his business grew until the firm we know as Spitz & Miller became one of the largest in Lake County.

George's activities were not limited to making money. He transferred the energy that was his trademark into civic and volunteer organizations. He was instrumental in forming the volunteer fire department and held badge number 1 throughout his life. In the 1930's George participated in the organization of the first Chamber of Commerce. George and Anna were among the founders of St. Mary Parish and remained active supporters throughout the years.

George remained active in town affairs until his death in 1965.

Others

The sadness of writing a book of this sort is that so many who did so much cannot be included. The selection of these 6 men was based on their prominence and, quite frankly, the availability of research materials.

Their inclusion is much more than a random selection, however. They represent a cross-section of the community effort to build the town. If anything, the history of Griffith is that of a team effort in which everyone worked and sacrificed using ingenuity and perseverance to make a town grow from a marsh.

These six men represent the "new breed" in its formative stages as the town entered the Twentieth Century. While we may have jumped ahead of our story, it is important to see the type of people who will be instrumental in the town's growth.

To sum up the basis of this chapter, the town stood on the threshold of greatness as the 1900's began. With both advantages and liabilities, the balance would be determined by the courage, the ingenuity, and the perseverance of its people.



William Peter Govert
Town pioneer
& First Board President

Incorporation

In 1904 the leader of the Rough Riders at San Juan was the President. T. R.'s dynamic spirit proved contagious to American society. As the country's economy surged into an expansionist phase after recovering from the Depression of the middle 90's the future held the promise of the "full dinner pail."

Confidence was everywhere — from the foreign policy of "jingoism" and "gun-boat diplomacy" to the technological leaps of the Wright Brothers and the Wizard of Menlo Park. America was on the move. The frenetic pace of change, social economic and scientific, would continue until 1929.

The First Steps

It was in this mood of optimism that Griffith took its first steps toward institutionalizing its existence. Prior to 1904, while the area had been referred to as the Town of Griffith, it had, in fact, no legitimate town government. It was dependent on the township and county to provide basic governmental services.

In order that local residents might have greater immediate say in the destiny of the town, municipal government was necessary.

It was on October 29th, 1904 that the first fateful steps began. John Miller, R. H. Andrews, and Lou Southworth met to lay the groundwork. They planned and supervised the first election which was held in November of that year. With the area divided into three townships it seemed only logical to divide the town into three districts.

Griffith's first town board met for the first time on Nov. 19, 1904 in Harkenrider Hall. William Peter Govert was the trustee elected from the First District, Mathias Grimmer from the Second District, and Moses Toohill as the Third District representative. Matt Beiriger had been elected to the position of Clerk-Treasurer.

It is unfortunate that records do not hold more information regarding these men who started the town on those first key steps of the seventy-five years journey. While we have already seen a glimpse of the character of Matt Beiriger, Moses Toohill and Mathias Grimmer are relatively unknown. William Peter Govert, on the other hand, was a more famous member of the founding fathers.

Wm. Peter Govert

Mr. Govert was a long time resident of Griffith, having moved to the town in 1873. As a railroad agent, W. Peter was a natural leader for a railroad town. His home at 338 S. Broad which still stands is one of the earliest frame homes built in the town.

Unfortunately, the town would have the benefit of Wm. Peter's vision for only one year. William Peter Govert died in office in 1905 in the middle of his term.

The significance of his part in town government is far greater than that one year. Mr. Govert had begun a family tradition that has extended to this day. The legacy of William Peter included his two sons, Henry and Harry Govert, who both served their community as town board members. Leo Govert would serve on the School Board as would third generation Goverts, Art and John. Art would also, become postmaster in the 30's and a real estate developer. The tradition continues into the 70's. Present town board president, Merle Colby, is a member of this distinguished family.

The Job Ahead

The Griffith experience parallels the changing patterns of the country in the first quarter of the Twentieth Century. One of the most significant trends in our nation's history is the growing urbanization of that period. As farmers moved to the cities and rural areas became towns, innovative solutions had to be found to fit the new social equation. Infant communities struggled with the strange new requirements of modern life including roads, sanitation, electrical distribution and city planning.

We see the town fathers of Griffith grappling with these same problems at the outset of town government. One of their first priorities was to open Broad Street, then called Junction Avenue, further north. As a step in this direction, they appointed William Jansen as street commissioner and charged him to plow drainage ditches on the East side of the road. Over the years, town board minutes show a variety of citizens groups petitioning the town to extend streets including Main, Kopelke (Elm) and Rensselaer. At the time of incorporation, Lake Street was the only through east-west street which connected to any other settlement.

Other projects which took their attention were gravelling and oiling the new roads, hiring lamplighters (David Alger was the first) and, of course, struggling with the railroads to provide and improve their road crossings.

The early town fathers were quite generous in their



The Govert family in 1900. Front Row: George, Joe, patriarch William Peter, Cecilia, Anna (holding Harry), Charlie May and his mother, Mary Govert May Pfaneuf. Back row: Kate, John, Henry, and William.



Street Commissioners Irvin Alger, John Dutton, and Charles Walters spread stone on Wood Street in 1916.

sponsorship of public works. Board minutes indicate a ready willingness on their part to act upon requests for civic improvements. While road improvement was one of the chief projects, the town also embarked on a concrete sidewalk program in 1907 which continued for several years.

One unique solution to the funding of civic improvements was to draft citizens to do the work for free. Between 1905 and 1910 all able bodied adult men were required to work 2 days a month on the roads or pay \$1.50 per day missed. Only war veterans were excused.

Due to the disproportionate amount of land owned by the railroads, Griffith enjoyed a relatively favorable tax base which allowed the town government to develop a reasonable number of public works projects without strapping the residents with heavy tax bills.

The ambitious planning would have been for naught had it not been for the dedication of the town's employees over the years. The first (and for many years the only) employee was John R. Harkenrider. One of the first acts of that initial town board was the appointment of Mr. Harkenrider as the Town Marshall. The appointment was a natural as John had served in this capacity under township authority prior to incorporation. In addition, Harkenrider's hall, a large room in the second story of his home on South Broad functioned as an unofficial town hall for many years.

John Harkenrider's story is one of dedication to duty. Over the years, he would resign 3 times only to be reappointed several years later when his successor didn't work out.

Griffith was a relatively quiet town which probably didn't require a lot of law-and-order. The marshal's job became a "catch-all" for many other town duties. Mr. Harkenrider and his successors found more duties piled on their desks as the town fathers sought to expand municipal services. As the years went by these included: lamplighter, water commissioner, public works, and fire chief. These responsibilities were usually added with no increase in salary. John Harkenrider and his successors were the men whom the town looked to when the job needed to get done.



Griffith's tradition as a crime free community started with these men. The photo on the left depicts John Harkenrider, Griffith's first Marshall. The circular in the center shows John Taylor (seated) and an unidentified deputy. Dan Walters, town Marshall between 1914 and 1917 is the subject of the photo on the right.

John Harkenrider died in office in 1931 after dedicating 18 years over 4 different terms to the town's peace and well-being. It was probably the only way to get the town board to allow him to resign.

Instability

Considering the fragility of the fledgling little town, it is remarkable that it survived the early days of instability. After Govert's untimely death in 1905, Matt Beiriger resigned his Clerk Treasurer position. Blaine Hutchins was appointed to fill out his term only to resign shortly after being elected in his own right in 1906. Matt Beiriger was then appointed to complete Hutchins' term. In addition, town records show that the board would often respond to a petition for streets or other civic improvements by naming the petitioners as commissioners to see the improvements through. As enthusiasm gave way to the rigors of responsibility, these petitioners' names would resign to be replaced by newer petitioners.

The board's composition shifted repeatedly as the town sought to find its equilibrium. In 1906, Lou Southworth and Nicholas Austgen would join Mathias Grimmer and Blaine Hutchins. In the election of 1910, Alex Jamieson replaced Grimmer, and in 1912, Henry Govert and P. C. Taggart joined Jamieson, Austgen, and Beiriger.

It wasn't until 1914 that stability came to the Town Board. In that year, Louis Weyhe from the recently annexed northern district would join Henry Govert, Joe Grimmer, Matt Beiriger, and P. C. Taggart on the town's governing council. This board remained relatively intact for eight years and, even when Matt Beiriger left in 1922 to be followed by Govert in '24 the experience of Weyhe and Grimmer remained to guide the "new breed" best represented by W. P. Christenson and Adolph Penning in the middle 1920's.

The mercurial changes in leadership in those early days did not deter the town from ambitious expansion in municipal projects. Obviously, belief in the town's future coupled with the nation's strong economy encouraged the townspeople to emulate its larger neighbors in Lake County. The concrete sidewalk building program was expanded in 1909 and continued for years. In 1919 voters elected to launch a municipal water system which included the drilling of wells, building pumping stations, and laying water lines throughout the town. In that same year the town authorized the installation of electric street lights.

Earlier, in 1914, the ambitious little town had expanded north and annexed the area of Ridge Road. This would prove to be an extremely wise move in that in the 1970's the Ridge became the town's busiest commercial district including the new Griffith Park Plaza.

The impetus for this expansion was begun in the early days of 1907.

Two major projects gave the town identity, cohesion, and a sense of civic pride. The first was a substantial step forward in education. The second was to become Griffith's best known municipal landmark.



Griffith has always favored music as a way to relax. Here, 4 early leaders enjoy harmony in 1910. Front row: T. Kestler, Joe Russell. Back: Percy Taggart, Blaine Hutchins. All but Kestler served on the Town Board.

It began when P. J. Beiriger, Griffith's representative to the Calumet Township School Board, reported that the township was dragging its feet in building new schools in Griffith. At his recommendation the town created its own school board with independent taxing and bonding authority. Beiriger was appointed to this new board along with Charles Barney and John Miller. Their overriding task was to plan a central school for the town.

The New School

In 1910 this dream took a step closer to reality with the purchase of property in the 200 North block of Junction avenue. Six thousand dollars in bonds were floated and construction begun later that year. When the September semester opened in 1911 a new central school awaited the students. Franklin School began its 70 year history.



The pride and joy of the little railroad town opened in 1911. The earliest photo of the school (above) shows how it appeared before improvements. In the spring of 1912, Franklin's first students posed for this class portrait (below)



It would be Griffith's only school for almost 50 years. Franklin would become the focal point of the town's intellectual and social growth for much of that time. The closeness of the faculty and student body would weave the fabric of the town's future as two generations of leaders were formed within its halls.

Franklin School was truly the jewel of the little town in the marsh. Through good years and bad, money was always found to improve or expand the school. After adding a high school curriculum in 1912 it became the first school in the Highland-Griffith-Ross cor-

ridor to offer secondary education. Town records show regular expenditures for improvements and additions making construction an almost continual project for 20 years. D. L. Simon, School Superintendent until 1937, remarks in his memoirs that while his initial impressions on arrival in town in 1926 were appalling, things improved rapidly over the years due to the town's overwhelming commitment to quality education led by P. J. Beiriger and Dr. Malmstone.

The original Franklin building no longer stands. It was replaced by a modern building of greater efficiency. All that is left is the original cornerstone as a testament to a small town's investment in the character of its youth.

The tradition of sacrifice to support quality education continues today.

Town Hall

At about the same time that plans for Franklin were taking shape, residents began to petition the town board to construct a Town Hall. The response of the board was that it would have to wait until the school was built — education took priority.

Tentative plans were made however, and as funds became available the plans became more concrete. It was in 1911 that the cornerstone was laid at 111 North Broad. The original building was designed by architect M. Kendricks and built by G. P. Pearson at a cost of \$4,853.00. This combination meeting hall, jail, and municipal office would serve many uses including social center and place of worship as the town's needs grew.

It was these two successful projects, Franklin and the Town Hall, which became the rallying point for the community's confidence and spirit. They were the first tangible evidence of Griffith's ability to govern itself. Now that they knew that they could do it, the people would face the challenges of the future.



The town hall as it appears in 1979 is similar to what it looked like in 1912. The police and fire station was added in 1953.

The Developer

Among those challenges was the problem of the largely undeveloped lands of the Dwiggins era now owned in large part by the absentee Osterhout estate. One of the forces that would work to change that came from Chicago in the form of a French Canadian dynamo named Ernest de St. Aubin. His family had settled in Chicago in the 1860's, then returned briefly to Canada only to give it another try in the city after the Great Fire in '71. While it is not clear in what business they were involved, it provided enough wealth for young Ernest to begin his real estate ventures in the 1890's. Ernest de St. Aubin later formed a partnership with a Sol Goldbert and A. Haddow Smith who became their resident agent in town. The de St. Aubin venture became known as the Griffith Land Company and began to buy and secure options on significant portions of the Osterhout land. The de St. Aubin developments began shortly after the turn of the century. In 1910 they appeared before the town board requesting approval of their second addition.

Their ventures picked up speed when, around 1913, Ernest moved his family from Chicago to Griffith in order to closely supervise his investment. Their first home was the empty North School. Several years later they moved to a new home at Lake and Griffith Blvd. where their ten children were raised. In the ensuing years their realty office was established at the Southwest Corner of Broad and Main.

Like many before him, Ernest de St. Aubin's vision exceeded his capital. At one time he applied for and received the franchise to provide electricity in the town. This farsighted idea was not to see fruition, however, in 1912. The town board rescinded the franchise and gave it to the forerunner of NIPSCO. The de St. Aubin enterprise picked up some of the flair of the older boom era by patterning their brochures after Dwiggins materials. They are remarkably similar although



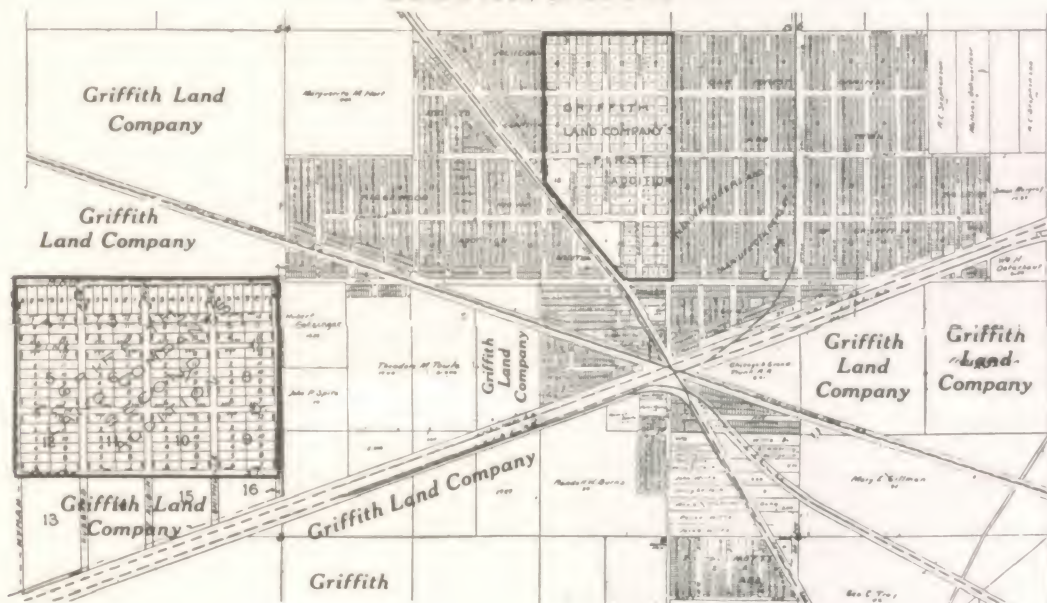
Ernest de St. Aubin
circa 1920's

Town of Griffith

A Practical Location for Manufacturing Industries

Outside of Chicago city limits, and yet with 26 railroad connections, Griffith has economic advantages over Gary, close by, Indiana Harbor, East Chicago and adjacent towns. Correspondence with manufacturers solicited. Address

GRIFFITH LAND COMPANY GRIFFITH, INDIANA



there is no relationship between the two ventures.

The greatest difference between de St. Aubin and Dwiggins was Ernest's conservative style. A staunch Catholic of strict Canadian upbringing, Ernest is remembered by his contemporaries as a man of somewhat aristocratic manners, determination, and a fiery temper. His fiscal policies were sound and underneath his business-like exterior he was a warm individual who, like his fellow citizens, contributed quietly to the civic projects of the town.

While the growth of his venture was slower than he might have wished, his developments accounted for a substantial portion of the growth of the town from 1900 to 1928.

Unfortunately, he did not live to see Griffith reach the potential he foresaw. Ernest de St. Aubin died in 1928.

His sons Laurent and Ernest II had been active in town affairs including the volunteer firemen, civic organizations and, of course, the family business. Their interests expanded to include developments in Hammond in the late 20's. This shift of attention and the Great Depression would force them to dispose of significant properties in the thirties. These tracts were purchased and developed by W. P. Christenson.

Worship

The wave of optimism washed across the entire spectrum of life in the little town as it grew in the middle teens. As it spilled into the economic and social life it created new goals and dreams. One of the most important of these new stirrings was the desire to have a church in town. Prior to this era there had been one attempt to build a church by the Baptist congregation during the Dwiggins era. Like everything else in that time, that attempt failed to be completed. It would be up to the Methodists to lead the way to Griffith's first house of worship.



Original Methodist Church
1915

The small Methodist congregation had met in homes and storefronts and, after 1911, in the Town Hall. They were led in prayer by circuit-riding ministers from the Northwest Indiana Conference for those early years. Buoyed by the growth of the town, the congregation set their sights on building a permanent church. After considerable fund raising efforts, the dream of the congregation was realized when in 1915 the frame structure rose at the corner of Lafayette and Columbia. With a sanctuary, basement, and two classrooms in addition to the main hall of worship the building cost over \$5,000.

For three years the Methodists were the envy of all other religious groups in town. In 1918 the church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. The members would start over and rebuild several years later. In the interim they met for services in the Town Hall and stored what furniture they had saved from the fire in the town hall as well. Once again they set out on a fund raising campaign including church socials, pledges, and concerts. The later were quite successful due to Griffith's passion for music and concerts.

In the early twenties their perserverance was rewarded when the second church, built of brick this time, was completed. This church became the 40 year home of the growing congregation. Built west of the first site, the church still stands on Columbia west of Broad. That congregation of 61 members grew and so did the building. Several additions were climaxed by the construction of the east wing which extended the structure to Broad Street in 1950. Even that was not enough in 1960 when the church membership totaled 1600. The Methodist Church is now located in an ever expanding complex on Cline Avenue at 44th Place.

The Christians

The second church in town was built by the Christian congregation. In contrast to the Methodists the develoment of this church was almost instantaneous. The congregation was the outgrowth of a series of revival meetings held in the town in the summer of 1920 and sponsored by the Hammond Christian Church. With enthusiasm high, the new congregation, along with help from fellow church members from as far away as Porter County built the church in one day. The frame church constructed at this festive building-raising on August 8, 1920 still stands at 231 North Broad. It was enlarged, moved, and remodeled over the years. Minister J. K. Woerner was the driving force in the congrega-
tion from 1928 to 1946 during which they relocated to their present site of Pine and Harvey.

The little frame structure still serves a holy purpose as many other embryonic denominations have used it as a starting point. Presently it is the site of the Bible Baptist Church, Rev. Ken Jones as Pastor.



Top: The second Methodist Church, located on Columbia, is now the Masonic Temple. Bottom: The third Methodist Church, located on Cline Ave., is on the site of the old Gustafson farm.



The original Church of Christ has been used by many denominations since that original congregation moved to the church pictured on the right (Pine & Harvey).

The Catholics

While the Catholics were the largest denomination in town they were relatively slow to organize their own parish. This was probably due to the conservative fiscal policies of the Fort Wayne Diocese. However, in 1921 they received permission to split from St. Michaels in Schererville and St. Mary Parish was formed. Reverend Joseph Suelzer was appointed pastor and in 1928, a combination church and school building was built with the proceeds of seven years of chicken dinners, church socials and difficult fund-raising.

No story about St. Mary's (or the religious development of the community, for that matter) can be told without Monsignor Leo Hildebrandt. Transferred from Hammond in 1932, he became the pastor in Griffith in the depths of the depression. For 40 years he was the spiritual leader of Griffith's large Catholic community and the dean of our town's clergymen. In the days before ecumenism, he created a spirit of co-operation among all denominations. During his tenure he fought off the mortgage holders, rebuilt after the fire of 1940, sponsored two parishes (Our Lady of Grace and St. James both of Highland), trained most of the priests who went on to become pastors throughout the area and helped form the Gary Diocese. In between he expanded the facilities of the parish several times including construction of the present church in 1958.

Monsignor is now retired but still lives in the rectory that has been his home for those many years. Fortunately, he is still part of the community in 1979.

To many older parishoners, the identity of St. Mary Parish and Father Hildebrandt are inseparable.



Monsignor Leo Hildebrandt



Father Joseph Suelzer and the entire parish posed for this picture after the first mass in the new parish in 1928. St. Mary Parish Church as it is today is shown at right.

Cooperation & Safety

One of the key lessons to be learned from the church histories was that mutual co-operation among its diverse elements was the key to the town's continued success. When a congregation needed a meeting place during their formative years, the Town Hall was available without fuss over separation of church and state. The churches have reciprocated by offering their halls to many public groups as a gesture of civic interest. In 1979 Griffith is the home of over 19 churches, all of whom play a part in the community's social and spiritual life.

Compromise and joint effort was the only means of survival in those challenging days.

Most improvements were a blend of the social, economic, and municipal. One of the best examples of these cooperative efforts is the 60 year history of the Griffith Volunteer Fire Department.

Town government took the first steps in fire protection when, in 1908, the board spent \$438 for two hand pulled chemically activated fire wagons. A loosely organized group was coordinated by Marshall Harkenrider to man the fire equipment. Growing urban needs pressured the board to expand the fire fighting capacity over the years until 1920 when a new fire truck was purchased for \$3,750 (75% of what they had paid for the Town Hall nine years earlier).

The significance of this purchase cannot be overstated. It signals a new direction on the part of the town. From that moment on, a new priority was established. Griffith made a commitment to professionalism in fire protection that continues today.

With the purchase of the new fire engine it became necessary to organize the fire fighting efforts into a department. In 1920 the Griffith Volunteer Fire Department was born. It was originally authorized to include 30 men, 24 of which were recruited in a few days.

A new barn to store the new truck and equipment was built for \$1,210 by Robert McFarland, one of the new volunteers. While his family business grew through the decades, Robert continued to devote considerable time and energies to civic projects. He later became fire chief and was responsible for much of the modernization of the department over the years.

From those initial days, our volunteer fire department has grown to three stations and several hundred men. The dedication to excellence has not changed. The tradition of sacrifice has continued to this day. It was exhibited in the 1920's when firemen attended classes and seminars in distant locations to broaden their skills. It continued in the thirties when, due to the depression, the Town Board sought to economise by cutting their small stipends to keep the membership number stable. The tradition was enriched during the 50's and 60's when the firemen bought old and damaged trucks and equipment to restore and rebuild them on their own time. This dedication still lives today as the Griffith Volunteer Fire Department serves an ever more complex town of over 25,000 with expertise and a professionalism that rivals its larger neighbors with full time departments.



Left: Original volunteer firemen pose on the brand new "1921 Red Speed Wagon". Right: Griffith's volunteers have rebuilt most of their equipment over the years.



Years of Struggle — Years of Hope

The unbridled confidence of America in the late teens overwhelmed the barriers of isolationism and swept the country into World War. Patriotism reached a fever pitch in 1917 as the largely German population of Griffith sent their sons off to "whip the Kaiser."

As a display of patriotic enthusiasm, the townspeople organized a giant dinner as a sendoff to Griffith's new recruits. Speeches by local leaders, army recruiters, and civil war veterans highlighted the evening to which the whole town of 500 was invited.

As the boys marched off to "over there," the town lock-stepped behind them in support of the war effort. Griffith oversubscribed two war bond drives while collecting and recycling scrap metal.

Some who marched away so gallantly would never return. Chauncey D. Walters was the first to fall. The American Legion Post was named in his honor in 1923. Others who gave their lives "to make the world safe for Democracy" were John P. Westerhout, R. Kilbourne, John Jansen, and Joe Austgen.

Those who returned to the love and admiration of their families were different from the boys who had marched away. As the years went by, they would take the reins of the little town and lead it in a new direction. Their most immediate concern was to build a life for themselves and their families in an America of increasing social polarization and frantic activity.

Griffith offered opportunity to these and others. As the twenties roared, business expanded around the country, and Griffith enjoyed many of the benefits. In the 20's the town was on the way to becoming a well balanced economic entity. As Griffith's small industries expanded and new ones were started, new jobs were created providing the magnet to draw new residents. In response to this influx, residential construction boomed and commercial enterprises sprang up to serve the expanding population.

Among the industries at the time were the Smith-Victor Company on Colfax (they were moving into the manufacture of photographic lights after making flashpowder in several other locations around the country). The Mapes Paper Products Company which had located in one of Dwiggins old factory buildings was expanding during this time as was the Potters Foundry on North Factory Avenue (now known as Lindberg). Owner B.B. Potter had served a term on the school board in 1910 and was active in civic affairs. For many years, Potters was the only foundry in town. But in the 20's there was a young man on the horizon who would change that.

Three Generations of Foundrymen



It was in 1927 that a young man came to Griffith to build its second foundry. For almost 50 years the relationship between the town and the Louis Keen family would be one of mutual respect and cooperation. From its beginning on the site of an old blacksmith shop southeast of Main at the intersection with the EJ&E to Griffith's largest industry in the 60's, the Keens retained a Louis' philosophy that a business should help its neighbors and contribute to the community. Louis Keen's foundry became a significant employer in the late 30's as munitions production expanded. The foundry was operated by three generations of Keens until its sale to N&A Foundries in 1977.



Griffith's WWI volunteers
at town wide sendoff

Stores and Shops

Mercantile enterprises were springing up as well. W. P. Christenson was expanding his coal operation and getting ready to enter politics in 1924. The McFarland family, relative newcomers to the town, were expanding their lumber yard as well. In 1911 William McFarland arrived in Griffith from Boone Grove, Indiana to work on the railroad. Later he worked for Potter's Foundry and, on the advice of his sister who worked with a lumber yard in Chicago, he and his oldest son, Harry, started the William McFarland and Son Lumber and Coal Company in their back yard on Factory Avenue. In 1926 they moved to their long time location on East Main Street. Eventually, all his sons came into the business.

Other new stores in the twenties included the Bothwell's Grocery, a print shop, barber shop, and a new industry — the gas station. Among the first of these was May's at Broad and Columbia.

With so much expansion a local bank was a necessity. In 1920 the Griffith State Bank opened with \$25,000 in capital and a list of very prominent officers. Griffith residents on the board included P. J. Beiriger, Joseph Grimmer, Dr. Malmstone, and George P. Spitz. The bank was organized by C. Oliver Holmes, and R. A. Clark both of Gary. The optimism of the times would last only thirteen years as the bank was wiped out in the national bank failures of the depression.

All of this growth put Griffith on a solid economic footing in the twenties. The blend of industrial employment, shopping, residential neighborhoods, plus a cultural and social structure provided for the good life for the townspeople. While in 1928 Griffith was in the middle of a boom period, it wouldn't last forever. Although the town would suffer several economic shocks along with the rest of the country, it would weather the storm better than others due to its well balanced financial condition.

Municipal Improvements

With the tax base growing, the town board expanded municipal services. One of the major projects was the water system begun at citizen request in 1919. As more citizens appear before the board requesting extension of the water lines the project grew substantially. New wells were drilled and new pumping stations were added in the twenties.

Other civic improvements were attempted by the ambitious town board consisting of Louis Weyhe, W. P. Christenson, J. O. Russell, H. E. Bothwell, Adolph Penning, and Percy Taggart. This board, elected in 1924, presided while Ridge Road was paved, Main Street widened, and street lights were increased.

During this period Franklin School continued to expand as the population increased. In 1923 a gym and several classrooms were added as part of the ongoing construction at the school.

This led to the inclusion of interscholastic sports into the curriculum. The first big dividend of the athletic program was provided by the women. In 1928 the girls basketball team established a world's record that still stands today when they defeated Merrillville by the unbelievable score of 126 to 4. Ruth Hutchins scored 120 of those points to eclipse the old record by 108 points.

It is rumored that Merrillville did not field a team the next year.



Griffith State Bank — 1920-1933



D. L. Simon

The Superintendent

Of even greater significance was the arrival in town of Donald L. Simon in 1926. Originally hired as Franklin's principal, he became superintendent of schools shortly thereafter. His recollections of his eleven year tenure document the rapid rise in professionalism in public instruction accomplished by the town. More and better teachers were hired. The curriculum was expanded and modernized. The facilities were continually improved. This record was accomplished due to the leadership of P. J. Beiriger, Dr. Francis Malmstone, and Simon.

While his stay in Griffith lasted only eleven years, his performance during those critical years established a precedent for the dynamic, quality conscious school system of today. By organizing the school system along innovative lines and demanding the best, he channeled the resources of the town into school development. He left Griffith in 1937 to become Superintendent of Schools in Indianapolis.

The Crash

Griffith was riding high along with the rest of the country on the morning of October 24, 1929. By the evening of that day, the dreams of permanent prosperity were destroyed in the crash. In the ensuing bank panic the economy of the whole nation would be wrecked beyond repair in a matter of weeks.

The Great Depression was here to stay. Griffith suffered along with the rest of the country. The new bank that had opened with such fanfare at the beginning of the decade collapsed in the panic. It would make a valiant attempt to stay alive and reopen only to be robbed in 1931. In 1933, the Indiana Department of Finance ordered the Griffith State Bank to close permanently. The bank building was purchased by Sam B. Woods and donated to the town to be used as a library.

Even more serious problems faced the town as it stared into the teeth of the Great Depression. The industries were laying off townspeople, creating a ripple effect throughout the community. Due to the economic hard times the railroads assessed valuation dropped 25% thus wrecking the municipal budget.

To make matters worse, John Harkenrider, the dependable public servant, died unexpectedly in 1931. Tom Rutledge, his assistant for several years, was promoted to the Marshall's job.

The chief economy measures taken during those bleak days were the cutting of salaries. The Town Board consisting of Louis Weyhe, Earl Butler, Joe Grimmer, W. P. Christenson, and Ed Miller took the lead by slashing their paychecks by 40%. Laborers were paid as low as fifty cents a day. Street lights were turned off until accidents started happening on Ridge Road. The traffic light at Main and Broad was also shut off.

The signs of desperation are evident in town board minutes. In 1932 the board begins to borrow from the Street Department fund to pay the Marshall. The town Treasurer met with jobless homeowners to help work out terms for the payment of delinquent taxes in 1932.

Innovation & Sacrifice

The economic disaster cut across all social and cultural lines. Some groups met the challenge with resiliency and resourcefulness.

One example was the Boy Scout Troop under the leadership of Clayton Watkins. Since its inception in 1914, the group had been accustomed to the usual scouting program of field trips, campouts, and uniforms. When the treasury fell to 89 cents in 1932, no one could afford uniforms or camping equipment.

The troop substituted public service for nature hikes. They collected and repaired toys for needy children and distributed Christmas food baskets in 1932. They did their camping in Clayton's back yard where they ate pancakes and slept in homemade sleeping bags. Their outstanding service was recognized when

they were awarded first place in scout judging that year. In 1933 they were rewarded by a trip to the Chicago World's Fair.

Another dedicated group was the firemen. In 1932 the town board sought to apply the economy measures to the Fire Department by firing 25% of the firemen. The fire fighters met and agreed to spread a pay cut of 25% among all firemen rather than endanger the town by reducing staff.

The schools were especially hard hit. With their budget cut they were faced with the additional burden of a growing student population. The WPA programs of F.D.R.'s New Deal provided part of the answer. WPA grants were used to remodel parts of the school to create a science lab, a home economics room, a vocational shop, and other classrooms. The teachers cooperated by taking a 25% cut in pay and handling extra curricular activities on a volunteer basis.

Although there were no funds for major improvements, the townspeople still struggled to improve their school. In 1939, a volunteer civic group raised funds, scavenged for electrical equipment, and installed lights at Franklin Field.

Additional Burdens

With a 75% increase in town population in the thirties coupled with the decrease in tax revenues, the municipal budget was stretched to the breaking point. The answer was reorganization of management structures. The decade had begun with Dan Walters as fire chief. When he resigned in 1934, Nelson Mandernach was appointed. Upon his resignation in 1937, Robert McFarland was appointed to oversee the reorganization of the department with new standards, increased education, and decreased staff.

Optimism

1930 wasn't a very good time to start a new business. But Ernest Strack and Meinhard Niessen were optimists. After their arrival from Germany they started the Royal Blue Grocery Store on North Broad. Unable to buy a large inventory they crowded their goods to the front of the shelves. Through the years Ernest Strack's ventures expanded until today he and his sons own Lake County's largest local supermarket chain. The Strack family shares their prosperity with the community through civic philanthropy to this day.

**Ernest Strack and Meinhard Niessen
in the Royal Blue Store - 1930**



By 1939, things were looking up for Griffith and the rest of the country. Keen Foundry and Mapes were expanding slightly and residential construction was beginning again. The partnership of W. P. Christenson and Art Govert, grandson of William Peter, was in full swing. They would take the lead in realizing the dream of so many years — to build up the surrounding lands with large tracts of homes. Others who were engaged in this industry were James Phillips, realtor and Town Trustee; Lawrence Hilbrich; and C. E. Riehl.

The little town would prosper in the 40's. A wave of construction began then that would continue until today as America looks to suburbia and a new lifestyle.

Sam B. Woods, Lake County Historian, noted in his newspaper column of 1941 that McFarlands and Christensons were both expanding; Spitz and Miller had built a new building; and Walgreens had located in town. This was the beginning of the development of the west side of the 100 North block of Broad which would become the town's largest business district until the 1970's.

All this prosperity had a high price. After December 7, 1941, Griffith would once again send its finest young men to fight on foreign soil. There were no town wide banquets this time, just tearful farewells and prayers for victory. The town was just as supportive of the GI's as they had been of the Doughboys. Gladys Bothwell was the organizer of scrap drives. The Fire Department did without a badly needed truck when turned down by the War Production Board. Residents parked their cars and walked or took buses to conserve fuel and tires for the war effort. As before, the patriotic citizens had several successful war bond drives.

As a boost to the patriotic spirits of the time the recently organized Lions Club built a large War Memorial Board which commemorated all those who had fought in the first World War. After the war it was taken down for repairs and never re-installed. A more permanent marker now stands in Central Park as a memorial to those who fought in all wars.

Life still went on during the war years. The water lines were still being expanded. A Park and Recreation Board was established in 1942. Once again there was a change in Marshalls. Claude Patterson who had served since Rutledge's resignation in 1939 resigned in 1944 to take a job in a defense plant. William Kussmaul was appointed as his replacement. He would serve the town as its top law enforcement officer for over 20 years, first as Marshall and after 1956, Chief of Police.

Too Much Success

The boom in housing was creating a problem for the town in the 40's. Just as they had grappled with poverty in the Depression they now tried to cope with too much success. The treasury was depleted from the hard times of the Thirties and there was no way the town could afford to build new streets and sidewalks in the newly developed areas. The town board reluctantly informed the developers that the builders would have to make their own improvements. Over the years this arrangement became a traditional policy. Today, like most towns throughout the country, Griffith requires developers to provide water, streets, sewers, curbs, and sidewalks as a matter of course.

The town sought to come to grips with this expansion in other ways as well. In 1939 a new zoning ordinance was written and a Zoning Appeals Board established. By 1945 the code was obsolete. A committee of Hiram McFarland, Hans H. Estrup, and W. H. Allen was impaneled to revise the old code.

Post War Boom

In the waning days of the war ambitious plans were announced for the west side of the 100 north block of Broad Street. Harold Loomis headed a consortium of investors who would purchase most of the land and build a new Walgreens Drug Store and entertainment complex including a cafeteria, bowling alleys, and a theatre. When the building took longer than anticipated, the bowling alley was dropped. The Walgreen Agency is still there but the theatre operated only briefly. In 1944 the Gary National Bank opened its third branch and the first branch bank ever located in Griffith. William Allen was the first manager. This was one more indication of the tremendous expansion the town would face in the coming era.

After V-J Day the boys would be coming home. Like their World War I predecessors, their priorities would be jobs, families, and homes. Griffith was facing its largest challenges yet.

The Modern Era

As the country entered the post war years, two social and economic phenomena would revolutionize the country and drastically affect the now not so little town of Griffith. The post war baby boom and availability of cheap energy would create the new milieu later called suburbia.

The overriding concern of the returning veterans was to forget the horrors of war. They wanted to get a job - get married - get ahead - in short get started as fast as possible. The overall mood of the society was one of turning in and concentrating on smaller frames of reference such as families, local towns, and neighborhood schools.

To the city dwellers of neighboring industrial towns, the greener pastures of Griffith looked like the perfect place to raise their contribution to the baby boom. Gas was cheap so why not travel a little further to work if it meant a chance to live in quieter surroundings. As new developers saw the opportunities in Griffith the exodus began from cities such as East Chicago, Hammond, and Whiting.

The boom of the forties had brought the town population to 4,470 according to the 1950 census. Five years later, the population was 6,682. This seemingly incredible jump is indicative of the trend which continues today with a population of over 18,000.

While the expansion was welcome, it put an unbearable strain on municipal programs. Town Trustees, who were in essence part-time administrators, had to cope with a whole new collection of challenges. Technical problems of sewer engineering, flood plain construction, and management of a budget in the millions required expertise and sophistication. The new social structure created by the influx of new residents would complicate their jobs even further.

The new residents brought ideas with them when they moved. Among these were strong voting traditions. Prior to the 50's Griffith's two party ticket was not affiliated with either Democrats or Republicans. Candidates ran on either the Village or People's tickets. In 1955, the first election was held in which the candidates ran under their respective national banners. The former city dwellers, used to voting Democratic, rolled their party to victory in all positions except one.

The flood of new residents was causing extreme difficulties in the school as well. Despite extensive remodeling and additions, the school was inadequate to handle 12 grades of instruction. Unfortunately, the town had reached its bonding authority. In the best Griffith tradition, residents took the initiative and created a public holding corporation which sold stock and bonds until they raised the \$580,000 necessary to finance the construction of Griffith High School. The Griffith School Building Corporation was headed by Charles Colyer, Mrs. Robert Preston, and Calvin James. The new high school was completed in 1954.

Neighborhood Schools

In 1956 the school board of Jesse Sheets, Ted Tom, and John Govert sought to come to terms with Griffith's suburban sprawl. With residences covering a wider territory, the old central school concept was no longer feasible. After surveying the town's needs and growth patterns, they developed a plan that would incorporate four neighborhood schools. The system was further revised on the basis of K-6, Junior High (7-9), and Senior High (10-12). Kindergarten through sixth grade were to be housed in the neighborhood schools. Junior and Senior High students occupied opposite wings of the high school complex. In 1958 the first of the neighborhood schools, Eldon Ready on the far north Broad, was completed. Elsie Wadsworth School, named after one of our finest teachers, was completed in 1963. The final two neighborhood schools were completed in the 70's.



Fire and Water

As part of the effort to cope with expanding needs, Griffith built the first fire and police station in 1953. The opening of the facility at 115 North Broad was such a big event that over 10% of the community gathered for the ceremonies. A second milestone was passed in public protection when the town voted to install a metropolitan police system in 1956. Then Town Marshall William Kussmaul became Chief of Police Kussmaul. The significance of this step is important. The system provided for greater growth and demanded greater professionalism.

Immediately after this move we see the force expanding yearly. Their sophistication improves as well. All officers were expected to attend out of town seminars and specialized training as the years progressed. Through each successive chief's tenure, the tradition of excellence has been instilled in all the town's law enforcement officers. Furthermore, every chief has been promoted from within giving the town a continuity of service.

Throughout our history to this point we have continually referred to the water lines as one of the crucial municipal projects. By 1955 the project was still expanding its delivery system but the now familiar problems were still cropping up at the wells and pumping stations. The cost of new wells and new pumps plus citizens complaints of hard water prompted the town to look to the Gary-Hobart Water Company to provide Lake Michigan water for the town. In the late 50's Griffith tied into this private corporation's system. The town still buys the water from Gary-Hobart and handles delivery and billing in order to maintain quality control over the system. This move eliminated most of the outstanding difficulties with the water program and paved the way for further development.

Harkenrider's Successor

In the first two decades of incorporation John Harkenrider was the man to whom the town looked when municipal projects and services were needed. While the history of Griffith is crowded with dedicated public servants, none matched the "do-it-all" stature of John Harkenrider until the 1950's. In 1954 a young man left his pattern making job at Keen Foundry to join the Griffith Water Department as a meter reader and repairman. His quiet eagerness to apply himself by learning the intricacies of the system as well as attending out of town classes made him indispensable as time went on. Glenn Reyome was promoted to Superintendent of Public Works in 1965 and has become the John Harkenrider of the modern era. Serving three different town administrations of both Republicans and Democrats, he has kept his office above politics and his employees beyond the reach of patronage. The high standards of Griffith's public works department are one of the chief reasons for the town's success.

Service to the community is a Reyome family tradition. Glenn's son, James Reyome, is presently Chief of Police. His appointment in 1976 came after almost twenty years on the force, distinguished by youth work and an outstanding career as a detective.

Play Ball!

Griffith was never all work and no play. Athletics and music have always played a big part in the town's structure. Consequently, as Little League Baseball was booming across the country in the 1950's Griffith rushed to participate in this new organization. This volunteer effort was begun by a few ambitious people who constructed the first permanent diamond in Central Park. The group grew until it comprised three leagues with over 400 boys participating. The success of this group prompted the formation of other baseball leagues. The Babe Ruth for boys 13-15 was organized in the 60's. Girls Softball is the success story of the 70's.



Glenn Reyome



Baseball is Griffith's summer passion. Leagues for all ages and sexes keep the diamonds busy all summer.

More Improvements More Development

Through the 60's and 70's the story is more of the same as the upward cycle of economic development and public works continues. From the sewer project of 1961, when Griffith tied into the Hammond sewage treatment system to the massive Sewer Separation project of 1979, Griffith's leaders have constantly sought to improve municipal services. The qualities of resourcefulness, long range planning ability, and dedication have made the difference over the years.

It is this and more that has attracted the quality of development most evident in the past two decades. One of the best examples of this trend is the complex known as the Mansards. Begun in the middle 60's, The Mansards Apartments were the dream of three men, James Dye, Sherm McKeown, and John Bullard. Prior to this venture they had constructed hundreds of homes throughout Griffith as Landmark, Inc.

While they weren't the first apartment builders in Griffith, their massive development pointed a new direction for the town. Throughout its history, 90% of Griffith's families owned their own homes and apartments were viewed with apprehension. The Mansards changed all that. The architecture and quality conscious management has made this complex an overwhelming success. Their most unique feature, their exceptionally well landscaped grounds, has given them a national reputation as one of the country's finest developments.



Sewer Separation Project
1979



Two lifestyles - home and apartment living. Either way, Griffith's homes enjoy natural surroundings.

Books and Schools

As part of Griffith's overall intellectual growth, a new library was built in 1965 north of 45th. This new structure was a project of the Lake County Library system and was the result of many years of citizen persistence.

It is only fitting that we finish our history with one last word about education.

The plan for neighborhood schools devised in 1956 reached fruition in the 70's. The western area school named for P. J. Beiriger was completed in 1968.

The fourth school was the first school. Benjamin Franklin School was extensively remodeled and rebuilt beginning in 1973. Unfortunately, in the course of this new construction, the original Franklin structure was destroyed.

Anticipating this, the Franklin Open House was held in the spring of 1973. This day of nostalgia was offered to allow former students and teachers to visit one last time. It was at this event that this book was first suggested. It was from that wellspring that its researchers and writers drew their inspiration.

From the ashes of old Franklin School we hope a phoenix of community spirit will rise.

It is not the purpose of this book to glorify the past. Rather, it is our hope that the lesson of our history will be learned by future generations.

A town needs dedication, innovation, and persistence to grow. It needs people to love it.

It needs us all to believe in it.

Griffith Diamond Jubilee Corporation

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Calendar of Jubilee Events

July 1-Sunday — "Faith Of Our Fathers' Day"

A.M. - Anniversary services in all churches. Late afternoon - United Vesper Hymn Sing
Evening - "Coronation" of Griffith's Royal Court; prior to first performance of "Griffith-On Track!" (an hysterical-historical musical) - Griffith High School Auditorium

July 2-Monday — "Young America's Day"

Games and contests - Central Park, for youngsters through age 12
P.M. - Second showing - "Griffith-On Track!" GHS Auditorium

July 3-Tuesday — "Ladies' Day" — "Teens And Young Adults' Day"

Activities to be announced
P.M. - Contemporary Music Concert - "M & R Rush"

July 4-Wednesday — "Diamond Jubilee 4th Of July Parade"

Sponsored by the Jubilee Committee in cooperation with the Lions' Club
Afternoon - Old Fashioned Band concert at Central Park - Musicians' Union
P.M. - FIRE WORKS DISPLAY

July 5-Thursday — "Old Fashioned Bargain Days"

All Day - Broad St. and Ridge Road shopping areas, sponsored by Chamber of Commerce
Griffith Clubs and Civic Groups will also have Sales and Games Booths
P.M. - Third showing - "Griffith-On Track!" GHS Auditorium

July 6-Friday — "Homecoming And Pioneer Day"

All Day - Old Fashioned Bargain Days (Cont.)
A.M. - Registration at Hospitality Center, Franklin School
Noon and Afternoon - Lunch and program at Central Park for pioneers and senior citizens
Early Evening - Street Square Dance, Downtown Area
P.M. COUNTRY-WESTERN SHOW —

Featuring Freddy Fender, two performances, GHS Auditorium

July 7-Saturday — "Men's Day"

A.M. and Afternoon - Historical Displays
Noon — Men's Service Club's Combined Luncheon
P.M. - FIREMEN'S JUBILEE BALL - Jubilee costumes encouraged; men's beard judging contest
ALL proceeds from the Jubilee Ball are donated to the Griffith Volunteer Fire Department

July 8-Jubilee Committee Day

A.M. - Church Services in all churches
Noon and Afternoon - Barbecue Picnic for Jubilee Committee and their families
Jubilee Committee Recognition

Office Staff - Jill Zengler and Judy Young
Special Events Chairman - John Deets
Church Sunday - Rev. Doyle (Jack) Pavy
Historical Drama and Modern Music Concert - Ray Weaver and Gerry Spejewski
Lions 4th of July Parade - Glenn Reyome and Dana Frost
Fireworks - Bernard Depa and Frank DeFazio
Royal Family Coronation - Barbara Schweitzer
Ladies Day - Betty Hardin and Mary Pawlowski
Young America Day - Gary J. Sutton
Firemen's Jubilee Ball - Dana Frost

Revenue Division - Tom Dwan
Commemorative Coin - Ed Connell
Commemorative License Plate - Ed DeReamer - Marge Guliver
Participation Division - Greg Jensvold
Brothers of the Brush - John Fella and Nick Cominos
Wearing Apparel - Tom Gialovic
Belles of the Jubilee - Judy Bridges
Public Relations Division - Dan McCain
Downtown Decorations - Gale Riggie
Advanced Sales Division - Barbara Schweitzer

Captains: Betty Marsh, Ruth Schaller, Pat Huddlestun, Clara and Dewey Tuel, Debbie Cuppett, Donna Paul and Harold McCoy
Auditors: Wallace Welzien and Hiram McFarland
Volunteers: Robert Schweitzer, Clyde Paul, Dorothy Urbanik, Linda Shearer, Margaret Grimmer, Mildred Moats, Gayle Herron and Irene Miller



Pi Sigma Phi Sorority in 1950



Griffith Woman's Club - 1975 Officers



Junior Woman's Club Service Project - 1968

Griffith's Civic Groups



Lion's Club 25th Anniversary



Community Spirit - Christmas Decoration Project



Boy Scouts 50th Anniversary - 1977

Civic & Social Clubs with Date of Organization

American Legion Post 66 - 1926
 Associate Chapter, Tri Kappa - 1970
 Beta Sigma Phi, Sig Zeta Nu Chapter - 1954
 Calumet Astronomy Society - 1975
 Community Spirit - 1968
 Daughters of Isabella - 1951
 Girls Softball - 1966
 Grandmothers Club - 1951
 Griffith Babe Ruth League - 1957
 Griffith Booster Club - 1969
 Griffith Chamber of Commerce - 1928
 Griffith Democrat Club
 Griffith Grinnets 4-H Club - 1972
 Griffith Organic Garden Club - 1950
 Griffith Soccer Club - 1979
 Griffith Woman's Club - 1948
 Home and Garden Club - 1948
 Isaac Walton League - 1947
 Jaycees - 1958

Junior Woman's Club - 1956
 Kiwanis Club - 1971
 Knights of Columbus #3631 - 1962
 Little League - 1954
 Lions Club - 1940
 Men's Softball - 1976
 National Catholic Order of Foresters - 1933
 Navy Mothers Club - 1954
 North Griffith Extension Homemakers - 1946
 Republican Club - 1960
 Rotary Club - 1967
 Sam B. Woods Questers - 1970
 Swim Club - 1970
 Swinging Seniors - 1975
 T.O.P.S. Club - 1971
 Tri Kappa - 1949
 Veterans of Foreign Wars - 1956
 Welcome Wagon - 1955
 Yo Hoe Garden Club - 1950

Diamond Jubilee Sales & Service Directory

A Guide to Goods and Service Available to the Community

We wish to express our gratitude to the merchants who supported this book and all the other efforts of the Diamond Jubilee Festivities.

We hope that you will use this section, organized into easy to find categories, as a consumer reference for years to come.

We recommend that you patronize the people who supported the Jubilee.

—The Diamond Jubilee Committee

Business Directory — Index to Advertisers

Associations	51	Insurance	74
Griffith Chamber of Commerce.....	51	Herb Schumann.....	74
Knights of Columbus.....	52	Chuck Gard.....	74
American Legion.....	52	Spitz & Miller.....	75
Veterans of Foreign Wars.....	52	Manta & Hurst.....	76
Automotive	53	Jewelers	77
PTL Tire & Auto.....	53	Griffith Jewelers.....	77
Griffith Motors.....	53	C. L. S. Jewelers.....	77
Pat's Frame & Axle.....	53	Liquor	78
Griffith Auto Parts.....	54	Party Liquors.....	78
Griffith Texaco.....	54	Griffith Liquors.....	78
Conyer's Standard.....	54	Manufacturing	79
Tel-Star Communications.....	54	LaSalle Steel Co.....	79
Govert & Bridegroom.....	55	Smith-Victor Corp.....	80
Boender's 66.....	55	American Chemical.....	80
Beauty	55	Miscellaneous	
Hair Designers Unlimited.....	55	The Pipemaker.....	64
The Hairbenders.....	55	C & R Stationery.....	68
Jim & Carl's Barber Shop.....	56	Bakker Produce, Inc.....	68
Elaine Power Figure Salon.....	56	Lakeridge Medical Center.....	74
Cleaners	56	Griffith Used Book Shop.....	77
Vogue Cleaners.....	56	Carley's Moving & Storage.....	80
Griffland Village Cleaners.....	57	Terpstra Bros.....	83
Clothing	57	Smith, Hilbrich, Cunningham & Schwerd.....	86
Dudes & Dolls.....	57	The Griffith Shopper.....	93
Connie Casuals.....	57	Jeanne's School of Dance.....	93
Falveys.....	57	Pepsi-Cola.....	94
Harvey's.....	58	Mansard Apartments & Racquet Club.....	95
Construction	58	Reflections, Inc.....	96
Brant Construction Co., Inc.....	58	Griffith Ready-Mix.....	Back Cover
Salisbury Engineering, Inc.....	59	Pharmacy	81
Financial Institutions	59	Ribordy.....	81
Hoosier State Bank.....	59	Shakula's.....	81
Citizens Federal Savings & Loan.....	59	Griffith Drugs, Inc.....	81
Calumet National Bank.....	60	Park Pharmacy.....	81
Gary National Bank.....	61	Plumbing, Heating, Electrical	82
Griffith Federal Savings & Loan.....	62	Jack's Heating & Air Conditioning.....	82
Mercantile National Bank.....	63	Austgen Electric.....	83
First Bank of Whiting.....	63	Childer's Heating & Air Conditioning.....	83
St. Mary Federal Credit Union.....	64	Leathers Plumbing.....	83
Bank of Indiana.....	64	Recreation	84
Florist	65	Blythe's.....	84
Armar's Creations.....	65	Terpstra's.....	84
An-Dee's Floral Shop.....	65	Voyager Travel.....	85
Lamprecht Florist.....	65	Loomis Cycle Sales, Inc.....	85
Food Stores	66	Bowl-Arena Lanes.....	86
Strack & Van Til Super Mart.....	66	Clayton's Trailer Sales.....	86
Emsings.....	67	G & G Hobbies.....	86
Patty-Cake Bakery.....	67	Restaurants	87
Griffith General Health Foods.....	68	Perkins Cake & Steak.....	87
Funeral	69	Squigi's.....	87
Kuiper Funeral Home, Inc.....	69	Luigi's Pizza.....	87
Fagen-Miller Funeral Gardens.....	69	Magma.....	88
Home Furnishings	70	Griffith Dairy Queen.....	88
Griffith Furniture.....	70	Egg Roll Hut.....	88
Slumber Shop.....	70	Ye Old Town Saloon & Pizza.....	89
Albert A. Slater Furniture.....	70	John's Pizzeria.....	89
Hagen Furniture.....	71	The Tivoli Restaurant.....	90
K & B Interiors (Bix).....	71	Jimmie's Coney Island.....	90
Vierk's Hessville Furniture.....	71	Captain D's.....	90
Stereo Components.....	71	Herman & Mary's.....	90
Art's Furniture Refinishing.....	72	Villa Pizza.....	91
Home Improvement	72	San Remo.....	91
Griffith True Value Hardware.....	72	Walt's Tap.....	91
Wickes Lumber.....	72	Sa-Cha Grinders.....	91
Ace Hardware.....	73	Sherlock's Holme.....	92
Postema Paint & Floor Covering.....	74		



Broad St. - 1930



Griffith Park Plaza



45th St

From the days of Jacob Miller's Shoe Store to 1979's New Griffith Park Plaza, Griffith has been good for business. And business has been good to Griffith.

The Chamber of Commerce of Griffith was founded in 1928 on the premise that a good town needs good businesses — businesses that are honest, well run, and managed with the community's interest at heart.

For over 50 years your Chamber has existed to encourage and develop the philosophy that "Cooperation is Progress" and that progress contributes to the community. As we've grown from a few stores to our present size, we've recognized our responsibility. We're proud of our town's history and our part in it. We like to think of Griffith businesses as one of our town's important assets.



Broad St. - 1979



East Ridge Rd.

Presented by the hardworking men and women of

Griffith Chamber of Commerce

"ONE NATION UNDER GOD"



KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS, MARQUETTE COUNCIL, 1400 S. BROAD



The Town's Oldest Social
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(60 Years)
Veterans Serving
The Community
Since 1919

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132 Wiggs Street

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Hammond
5800 Hohman
932-5100

Griffith Motors

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Griffith, IN

924-5555

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Happy Birthday Griffith
John Muresan - Owner

Congratulations Griffith On Your Diamond Jubilee

Pat's Frame & Axle
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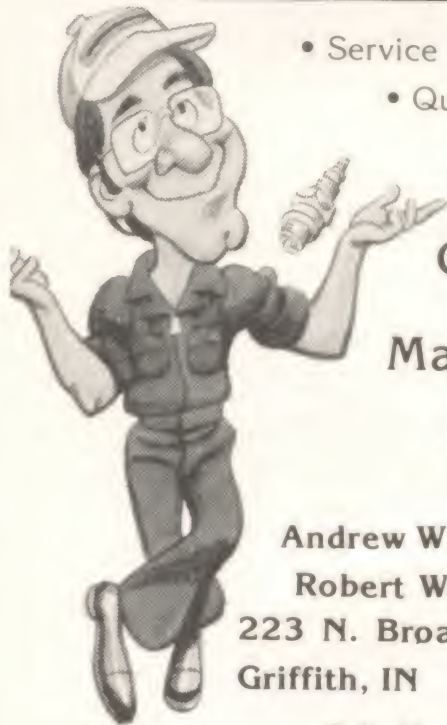


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Griffith, IN 924-4920

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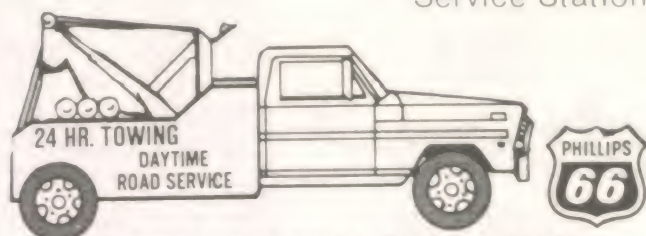
RICH FIX, Owner
MIKE GOODRICH, Manager

(219) 924-1770

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GRIFFITH, INDIANA 46319

Govert & Bridegroom

Service Station



GAS TANKS REPAIRED • TRANSMISSIONS

TRANSMISSION REPAIRING & REBUILDING • AIR CONDITIONING
SALES & SERVICE • AUTO REPAIR SERVICE • RADIATOR
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444 N. BROAD • GRIFFITH IND

32
YRS.

BOENDER'S 66 SERVICE

- Road Service
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- Motor Tuneup
- Brake Service
- Carburetion
- Minor Repairs



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Hair Care For Men & Women
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We've made it our business
to make hair beautiful.

A total concept with one thought in mind;
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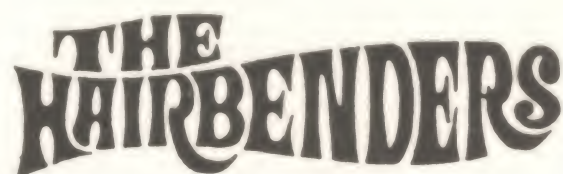
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The barber shop was established by Gene Dye in 1946 at 125 N. Broad and moved to 239 N. Broad in 1949. Ralph Rottier worked for Gene from 1950 to 1954. Carl Konopasek, Gene's son-in-law, joined Gene in 1954. Gene's son, Jim Dye joined the business in 1958. John Plohg began barbering in 1961 and worked there until 1975. After Gene's death in 1962, Jim and Carl moved their location to 225 N. Broad. They have been at this present location since 1965. John Canham came to the shop in 1977. Jim and Carl would like to thank the people and the town of Griffith for 33 great years. We are proud to be a part of this town and its 75 years celebration.

Jim Dye & Carl Konopasek
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(The Small Store With Friendly Service)



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663-4758

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Hammond, Indiana
933-0432

1720-45th Avenue
Munster, Indiana
924-1720

Growing with Griffith

75

Griffith, Indiana 75th Anniversary



Calumet National Bank
915 W. 45th Ave.
Griffith, Indiana

Calumet National Bank is proud to be
"Growing with Griffith."

Over the years we have watched Griffith grow and prosper and as a corporate citizen we have contributed by offering the latest in service and services.

In this continuing commitment we invite you to use our newly expanded Drive-In facilities. We have installed the most modern equipment available while at the same time more than doubling our service capacity.

Stop by today and let us show you how we are "Growing with Griffith."

"Your Good Neighbor Bank" In Griffith Since 1944



Greg Jensvold

Assistant Cashier
& Manager

In 1944 Gary National Bank began its branch at Broad and Main St. Extensive remodeling was completed in 1965.

Our present staff of **12** is there to serve you with **8** lobby windows and **2** drive-up windows.



In 1975 the Ridge-Griffith office opened at 1203 East Ridge Road. Our present staff of **11** is there to serve you with **8** lobby windows and **5** drive-up lanes.

Thomas Galovic
Manager



**GARY
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BANK**

GOOD NEIGHBOR BANK

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20 Years



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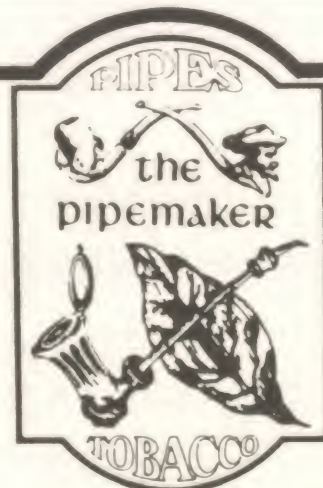
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Now In Our 4th Generation

Thank You For Your Patronage

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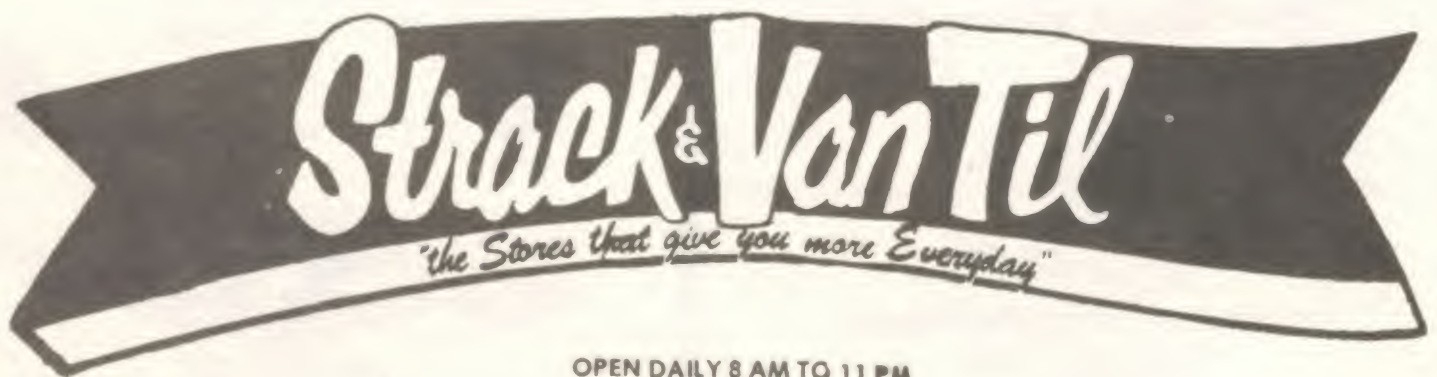
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to the town of
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on its

DIAMOND JUBILEE

STRACK AND VAN TIL
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OPEN DAILY 8 AM TO 11 PM

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Highland

Griffith

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Emdings

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ON THE
DIAMOND
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★ Nipso. Water & Phone Bills Paid Here ★ Money Orders Sold ★ Limit Rights Reserved

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Griffith*



We At Patty Cake Wish To Extend
Our Heartfelt Thanks To A City
On The Rise. We Hope That We
May Grow With The Community In
The Future Years And Serve It
Well. Happy Birthday.

Patty-Cake Bakery

213 N. Broad
924-4572

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And Health Specialties

For the
wheat, sugar
salt or
milk free
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free foods

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Drafting Supplies

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Bakker PRODUCE INC.
WHOLESALE FRUITS & VEGETABLES

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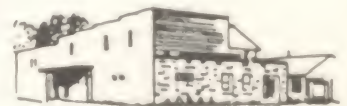
HIGHLAND
2828 HIGHWAY AVENUE
EASY ACCESS TO U.S. 6,
41 & KINGERY EXPRESSWAY

838-4818



GRIFFITH
242 N. GRIFFITH BLVD.

924-6543



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1920 HART STREET
2 BLOCKS NORTH OF U.S. 30

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3 Locations

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Bedroom, Dining Room, And Living Room Furniture

Complete Line Of Accessories

Same Location Since 1945

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We Salute the Griffith Diamond Jubilee,
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Free Delivery/Setup
Fair Prices — Personalized Service

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The Idea Store...



Now — NEW Expanded Showrooms!

*Offering 133 Color Coordinated
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*See Drexel, Thomasville, and other famous
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QUALITY
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FINE LAMPS
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CARPETING

BEDROOMS
and
BEDDING

SENSIBLE
PRICES

LIVING ROOMS

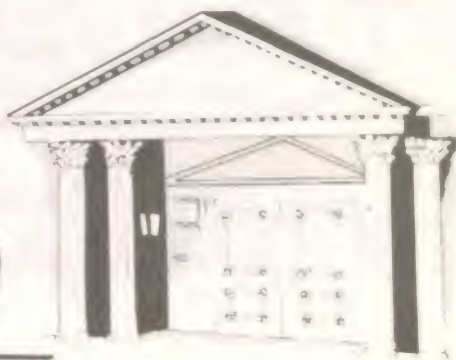
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SINCE 1917

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Spectro Acoustics
Nagatronics

And

Stereo Components Music Machine
Mobile Disco Service

*Happy Birthday Griffith
Dave And The Staff*

730 Seberger Drive
836-8840

Munster

Congratulations on the Diamond Jubilee



Art's Furniture Refinishing
1030 E. Ridge Road
Griffith 923-3565

Celebrating With You — Our First Quarter Century

Congratulations Griffith From:



Since 1940 At The Same Location
Gene & Joan Kurzydym

120 S. Broad
Griffith, IN
924-4102



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100
&
25
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- Insulation
- Doors & Windows
- Cabinets
- Plumbing
- Trusses
- Floor Covering
- Paint
- Heating
- Hardware
- Electrical
- Fencing
- Paneling
- Siding

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Griffith

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Floor Covering
Carpeting
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Paints
Service

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Offering complete
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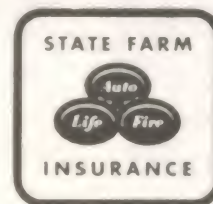


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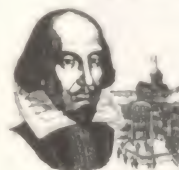
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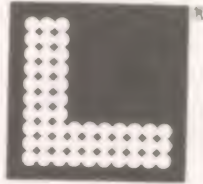
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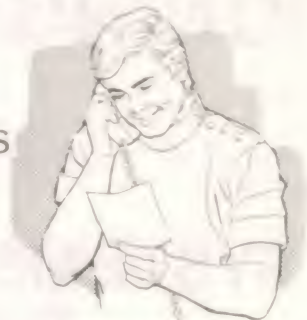
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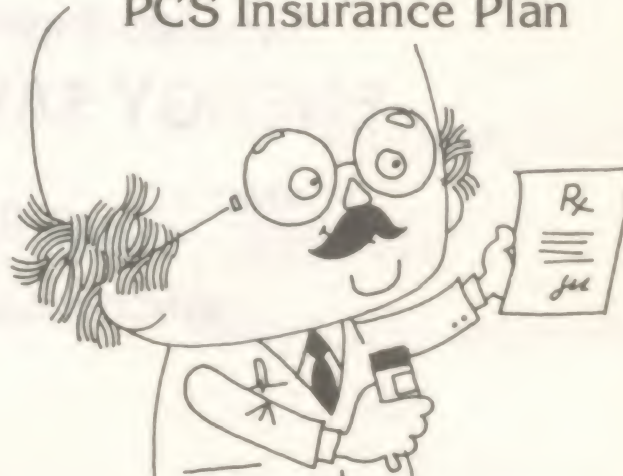
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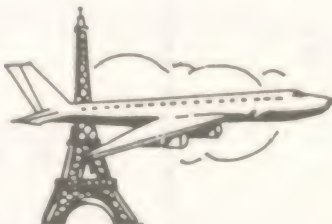
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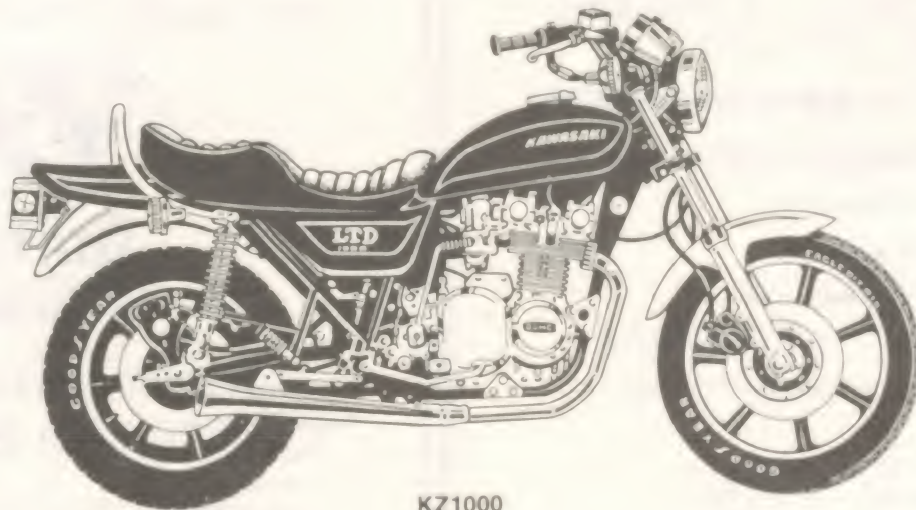


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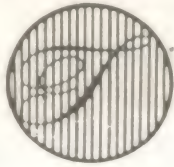
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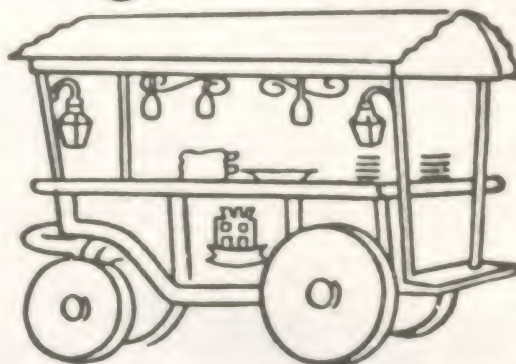
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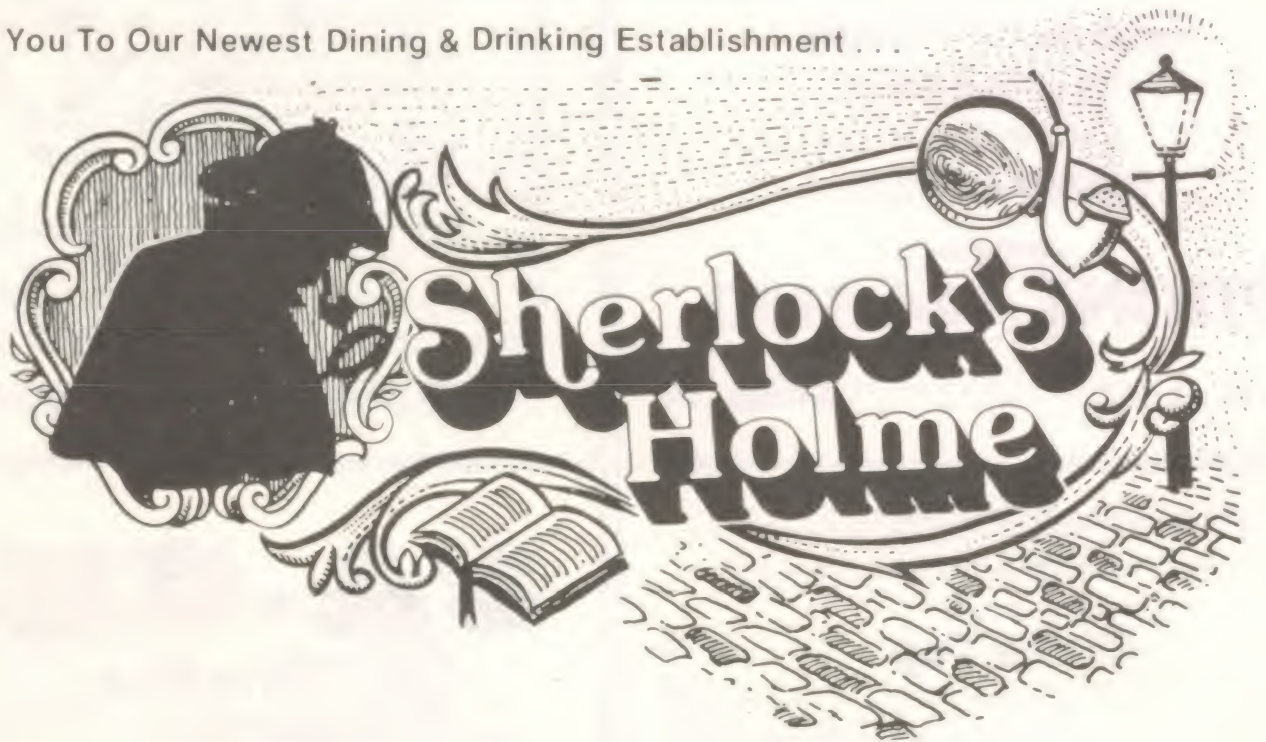
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